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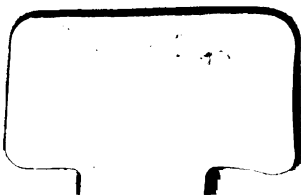
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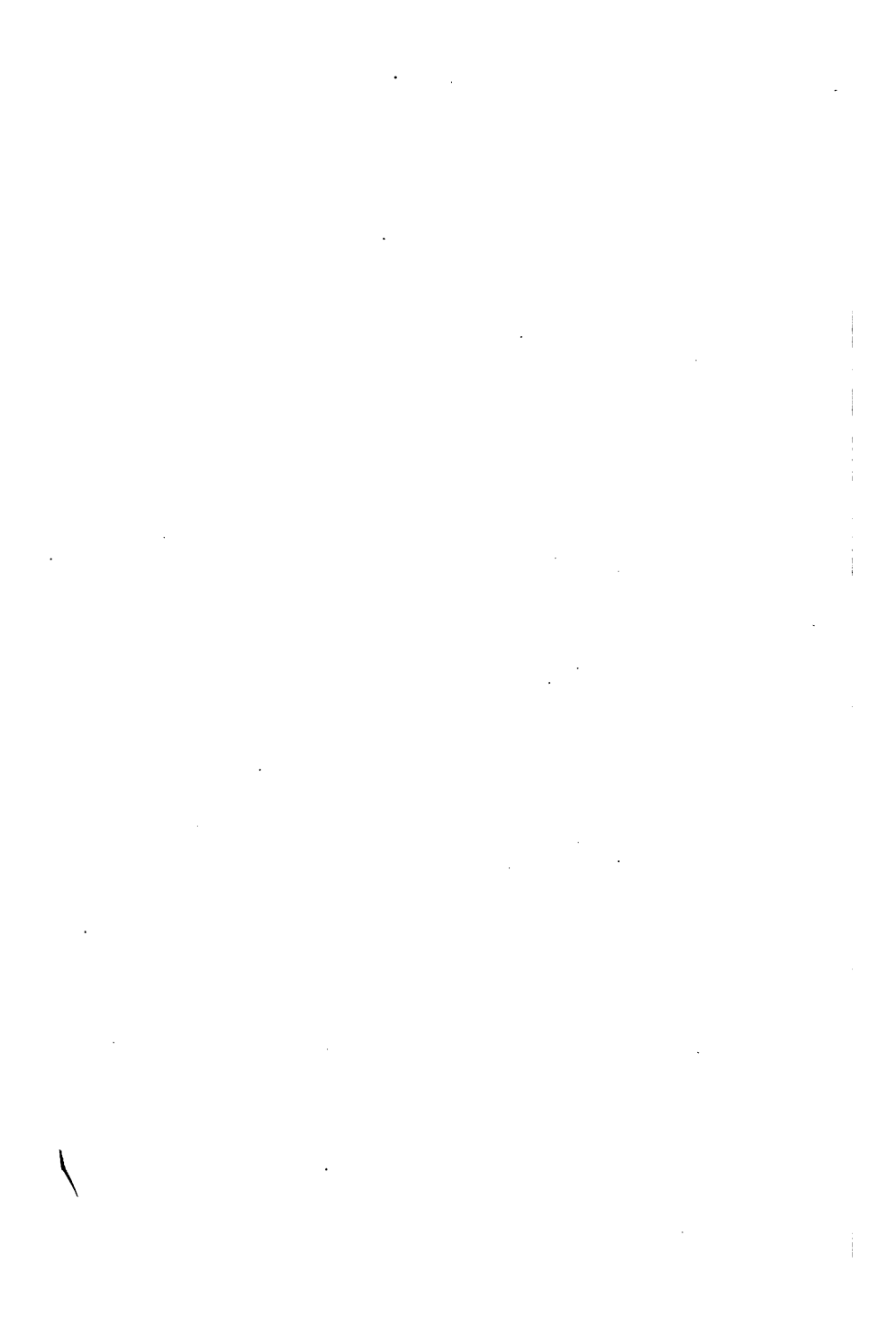
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# In the Land of the Boers

OR,

*The Other Man and Myself.*

BY

OLIVER OSBORNE.

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ILLUSTRATED BY J. B. CLARK.

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"That fiction pleaseth most which is the admixture of truth and falsehood."—*Bacon*.

London:

R. A. EVERETT & CO., 42, ESSEX STREET, STRAND, W.C.

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1900.

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## PREFACE.

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**T**HIS book was born in 1893, and the last edition saw the light two years later. The generous appreciation it then met with encourages the Author to hope that its reappearance, in a revised and popular form, may not be altogether unacceptable at the present moment.

Traversing a period of nearly ten years' wanderings in "the Land of the Boers," many of the scenes and incidents recorded will possibly be read with new and peculiar interest at a time when the world is agog with curiosity concerning all that relates to South Africa, its destinies, and its peoples.

LONDON, *January*, 1900.

27  
3/1/00  
S. Stevens



# In the Land of the Boers:

OR,

*The Other Man and Myself.*

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## CHAPTER I.

PROSPECTS OF A CITY CAREER—"SOMETHINGS" IN THE CITY—  
HOME TIES—A VISIT TO THE PALMERSTON—CUTTING THE  
TRACES—PRELIMINARY CANTERS—EXPEDITIONING AND ITS  
ATTRactions--BERT FAILS TO "FIX THINGS UP"—I TACKLE  
THE QUESTION—WET BLANKETS—WE DECIDE FOR THE CAPE  
—PREPARATIONS FOR DEPARTURE—BERT'S OUTFIT—FRIENDLY  
PARCELS DELIVERY SERVICE.

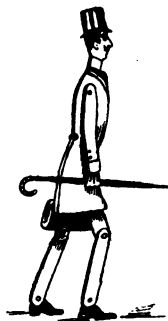
AFTER quite a long period of mental stress and  
anxious deliberation, Bert and I decided to  
steer for the Cape, and try conclusions there with  
Dame Fortune.

The last Boer war was just over. Majuba was  
still the sore subject of the hour, and Sir Frederick  
Roberts (as he then was) befooled, and irritated by his  
first and fruitless journey to South Africa, had hardly  
returned to England.

The question of our going abroad, and where we should go to, had gradually expanded from vague and spasmodic little growlings into a mutual determination to throw up what—to our aspiring young minds—had already, in the four years since we left college together, become an irksome and monotonous existence to us; a shabby-genteel sort of existence, calling forth the spurious airs and graces of gentlemen upon pittances scarce sufficient to meet the demands of our landlady, to say nothing of our washing bills, which were prodigious and proportionate to the immaculateness of the linen we were expected to display by our worthy employers.

At that momentous period in our history of which I write, Bert and myself were "some-things in the City,"—each something with a season-ticket, a black bag, a stove-pipe hat, and an umbrella. We were, in fact, pretty fair samples of that multitude of "City somethings" to be seen more or less any morning streaming up to the heart of the Great Metropolis from every point of the compass, returning whence they come like a disbanded army at the close of day.

Provided that Bert's own vague assurances upon the subject are to be accepted, he had an awful lot to do with shipping; and judging from the overwhelming amount of responsibility which, he said,



was thrust upon him, I imagine that he must have been Registrar for the Port of London or else a Wreck Commissioner. I rather favour the Wreck Commissionership.

I was a ledger clerk in a large private banking-house in Lombard Street.

Phew! What a life! It's dull monotony, it's everlasting routine and petty restrictions, as they rise up before my mind's eye, after years of travel and freedom, cause me to pause and marvel at the apparent apathy with which the toilers of the desk in this New Babylon accept their lot. The struggle for betterment is becoming harder year by year for the average city clerk. His German rival is slowly, but surely, cutting the ground from under him, and the day cannot be far distant when some decisive action will have to be taken to stem the tide of foreign invasion which threatens almost to denationalise us, and certainly to become as serious a problem in this country as the influx of Chinese is in the land of our cousin Jonathan.

Neither is the thrifty, plodding, brainsucking alien the only danger which menaces the educated English youth who looks intuitively to the pen as his most ready means of gaining a livelihood.

Female clerical labour is fast growing into public favour, and it needs no great effort to discern in the near future a far keener and more general competition between the two sexes.

The "lady clerk" has already assumed that air of prescriptiveness which savours of the "new woman," and threatens the future of her masculine prototype. Observe her in the post office, in the one-time forbidden sanctum of the City financier, in the typist rooms of the great mercantile houses. With pulseless indifference to her surroundings she dispenses her industry to the mere "men things" about her in a manner that compels respect and forbids flippancy.

With the expansion of our educational system, and the inducement offered to the children of the masses to compete with those of the hitherto more favoured upper and middle classes—and in those walks of life the doors of which are now being opened to them for the first time—it is difficult to forecast what the end will be. Certain it is that parents and their boys would do well to look further afield. Why such a mawkish dread of severing home ties for a time? Why that desperate clinging to the land of their birth? Sentiment is an excellent quality, but it may be carried too far, and especially so when it is permitted to tie one down to a life of impecunious drudgery.

Such or similar philosophy prevailed the minds of Bert and myself when we chanced one day, early in June, to be regaling ourselves with black coffee and cigarettes in one of the cavernous recesses of the Palmerston, whither we had dived during that all too brief but happy spell known as the luncheon hour.

We generally had our mid-day snack together,



settling the rendezvous on our way up to town in the morning. Sometimes it was at one place, sometimes at another; yesterday Pimm's, to-day the Crosby, to-morrow Sweeting's. We were disgraceful itinerants in this respect, I admit; but it was the nature of the animals—our natures, I mean; we each possessed a soul for sampling, and we did it.

But the Palmerston had a particular attraction for us. There was such a cosmopolitan air about the place that to wander around in the bowels of the spacious building, amidst the hubbub of voices, the animated, gesticulating little groups of swarthy Spaniards and dapper Brazilians, who seemed to form the chief element of the motley throng frequenting the great City buffet, was an especially pleasing relaxation for us, and to enjoy which we were prepared to run the risk of being asphyxiated by the tobacco fog which filled the air with the pungent fumes of countless cigars and cigarettes.

From the contemplation of our surroundings, and the enjoyment of my weed, I was rudely awakened by a sudden eruption of Bert, who is highly volcanic at times, though fortunately never dangerous.

"Hang it!" he burst forth; "I'm not going to stick at quill-driving 'midst bricks and mortar any longer. I wasn't built for it. I was intended for a soldier, an Australian squatter, a Texas cowboy, or something of that sort. Look here, old fellow, let us cut the traces and launch out, eh?"

There was such a delightful simplicity in his proposal that I acquiesced at once.

"Let us!" said I, with the desperate earnestness of a kindred spirit.

"Well now, that's grand old boy, if you mean it."

"Mean it? Of course I do. Cutting the traces will be easy enough, but how do you propose to launch out?"

"Oh! leave that to me. I'll fix things up."

I am Bert's senior by a few years, but not nearly so precocious a youth as he, who was then particularly so for his age, and a big boy into the bargain.

Perhaps this accounts for the belief I had in his superior wisdom and ability to "fix things up."

He started "fixing things up" the very next day. He brought home the most unique collection of "Official Government Handbooks," "Instructions to Intending Emigrants," "Guides to the Colonies," and similar interesting and irreproachable literature that I have ever seen.

For system and method I never met anyone who equalled Bert. He said the first thing to do was to decide where we should go to, then how we should go there, and finally, what we should do when we were there; and having decided these little points, we could throw up our billets and bid adieu to friends and Old England until fortune had beamed upon us sufficiently long to make us "warm."

Well, the programme appeared to be, like Bert,

simplicity itself, but somehow things hung fire a little.

Bert tackled Canada first, and soon became enthusiastic about its climate, its bracing winters and its mellowing summers, the fertility of Manitoba, the grandeur of the Rockies, and the grazing merits of the North West, until it seemed to me merely waste of time to trouble about the matter further, and that the Dominion was the one and only country we could think of favouring with our presence.

However, it was only fair that we should give the other colonies a chance, and see what they had to say for themselves; so we just dipped into the particulars about Queensland. We found them most interesting. It was just the sort of country we could be of benefit to, and we sat up until the small hours in the morning discussing the beauties of its climate, the possibility of tumbling on to a gold mine, a Government contract, or even a vacant sheep run, and finally decided that Queensland was far preferable to Canada, with its marrow-freezing winters, hot summers, and scalp-hunting redskins.

The following evening we were tempted to inquire into the attractions of other colonies, and our investigations and vacillations continued for about three weeks. It was a fortunate circumstance that we confined ourselves with patriotic exclusiveness to British colonies and dependencies, otherwise we might have been in the throes of indecision to this day.

At the end of the three weeks we had come to no arrangement or understanding with any colonial Government or their representatives, but we had become walking encyclopædias concerning the several countries we had taken in hand, and without the slightest difficulty could be provoked into giving the latest statistics regarding the population of the towns and districts, birth-rate, death-rate, and marriage laws, railway mileage, trade returns, and public debts, to say nothing of little scraps of interest concerning the climate, the physical or political constitution, of any particular country, and the best route to go by.

Our position was getting desperate and critical. We were not large enough to contain all the knowledge we had acquired, and some of it bubbled over of necessity into the sympathetic ears of our fellow clerks, producing at once an alarming and unexpected effect. It soon became known in our respective offices that we contemplated going abroad, and as the rumour gained strength and currency, so in proportion did the interest in our future welfare manifest itself. Our immediate juniors regarded early advancement for themselves as certain, the possibility of getting friends or relatives into the



vacancies was openly discussed, and the great unemployed also began to show unmistakable signs of interest in our movements.

If we had known as much as we think we do now we should have gone straight off on a glory hunt, in search of the North Pole, or to the rescue of some inoffensive old savant in the heart of Africa, it being a mere detail whether he really wanted to be rescued or not. But in those days we were only two simple-minded youths, who imagined that we must first be capitalists to undertake such gigantic responsibilities. We didn't know that there were so many people in this country overflowing with desire to lend their names and purses for such interesting exploits.

I should have gloried in arranging the details of such an expedition—say an African one for preference. In the first place, I should, of course, have ignored all other routes in favour of the worst one, and have arranged to conveniently lose myself for two or three months at the very least, which would have produced one of those periodical spasms of suspense and anxiety in England so necessary to give tone and effect to the undertaking. I should have fixed up, as Bert would say, a little man-hunting, starvation, and shooting, and finally, having played Napoleon generally for a year or two, have endeavoured to cram into print within a few weeks a most veracious and elegant account of all I had seen and done in the sole interests of humanity and science.

Or failing Africa there would, as I say, have been the eternal attractions of the North Pole to fall back upon. As in the African undertaking, I should, of course, have chosen quite an impossible route. The Arctic regions have a choice selection of impossible routes, and I could have arranged to lose myself quite a number of times among the floes and the fiords, and anything else that lent itself for the occasion, and finally I could have rounded off my published experiences of pathetic failure by a harrowing recital of how, for many weary months (or years), I had floated about on an iceberg, dispensed with soap, and lived on blubber.

However, I was not destined to acquire greatness and renown by any of Fortune's short cuts, nor, for that, by any more circuitous route.

I was fast losing confidence in Bert's ability to "fix things up," and as quickly brought down upon my devoted head that individual's wrath for telling him so.

"Confound it! Why don't you make up *your* mind then—that is to say, if you have one; for I'm inclined to doubt that you have after the exhibition you've made of yourself during the last few weeks. Of course, I know exactly what *I* want to do and where *I* want to go, but you seem bent on a tour round the world, so you had better start off at once, and I'll wait till you return. At any rate, you show such barefaced ingratitude for all I have done to assist you to make up what

you are pleased to call your mind that I am determined to leave things to you now."

I felt very hurt at this uncalled-for and violently vulgar, but characteristic attack upon my ability to make up my mind, or, as Bert said, what I was pleased to call my mind; for, if there is one quality which I flatter myself I possess in a greater degree than any other, it is decisiveness. Bert said he knew exactly what he proposed to do, but, for the life of me, I could not prevail upon him to impart his intentions to me.

His positively indecent haste to thrust the odium of indecision off his own shoulders on to mine, metaphorically speaking, put my back up, and I resolved to set about the business of seeking "pastures new" for our energies abroad by obtaining the personal advice and assistance of somebody well acquainted, or connected with one of Britain's great colonies.

It may not be out of place here, perhaps, to refer to the manner in which such personal advice and assistance is too often sought and given.

Many young fellows, fairly educated, but having neither profession nor trade whereon to rely, have hesitated, if not, indeed, altogether abandoned the idea of leaving England on account of the earnest and frequently well-meant dissuasion exercised by the persons to whom they have appealed. These persons, as often as not, in their ill-directed zeal for the welfare of those seeking their counsel, have drawn, and, for that matter, are still drawing, grossly exaggerated

pictures of the difficulties and hardships which await the ambitious young Englishman abroad; and to listen to the doleful tale of these pessimists is enough to make the most sanguine and adventurous youngster doubt whether he had after all better essay any attempt to ameliorate his lot by going to a new country, or rather remain where he is—probably only to fare even worse than if he had crossed the seas, and in reality experienced all the difficulties and misfortunes supposed to await him there.

Strangely enough, the class of people I have found most prone to apply the wet blanket in this way are well-to-do colonists visiting this country, who not infrequently, and whilst they entertain no suspicion that they may be directly or definitely appealed to, are pleased to edify those with whom they come in contact by giving most glowing description of the particular colony from whence they hail—the climate is perfect, the laws and institutions excellent, the further rapid advancement of the country assured; and, in fact, they express themselves as pining to return to the Elysium they have left, and weary of the trying and variable climate of England, the social restrictions, and the irksome conventionalities which surround them here.

But woe betide the young man who has the temerity to approach such individuals with the object of gaining their sympathy or help in establishing himself in the country thus eulogised.



A metamorphosis takes place immediately, and the erstwhile optimists become extreme pessimists.

They beseech the young man to carefully reconsider the step he proposes to take, and strongly—very strongly, indeed—advise him to remain where he is. They hold out no hope—no hope whatever that he will be able to obtain employment in the colony whilst the prevailing depression lasts; there is, by the way, invariably a depression with these individuals, usually, it may be remarked, for the most part prevalent in themselves.

Another class whose efforts are directed towards the same end are those derelicts of Society, who, having utterly failed to do any good for themselves or the reputation of their families in this country, have been either persuaded or coerced into crossing the seas under the delusion that an opportunity will thus be afforded them to mend their ways.

For anyone who has seen the disastrous results attending this casting adrift of useless humanity upon the sea of trouble and degradation which awaits them wherever they go, it is difficult to find words to express the indignation it arouses, or contempt one feels for those mainly responsible, and who, to ensure their own individual peace and comfort, are willing to sacrifice, body and soul, a besotted son, a vicious brother, or a fallen friend, by depriving him of what little home influence or interested sympathy may still be left to him whilst he remains in this country.

Stranded upon a distant shore, he quickly goes from bad to worse, and ultimately sinks into an early grave, "unwept, unhonoured, and unsung."

Why send such men to the colonies? It is an injustice to themselves and a curse to the community they are cast among.

And yet I have heard the pitiful careers of such wastrels held up as a warning to respectable young men anxious and able to better themselves in a new country, and even credence given to the fretful wailings raised by "ne'er-do-wells" at the failures and misfortunes which attended them abroad.

To the typical young Englishman who is "cribbed, cabined, and confined," and underpaid in this country, who enjoys good health, has the pluck and desire to break old associations, to try a new sphere, to put his pride in his pocket, and turn his hand to anything which will enable him to rub along, I say: ignore the Job's comforters who would tell you that you cannot even get an honest living abroad, much less improve your position.

Depend upon it, if you are made of the right stuff you will pitch on your feet wherever you fall, and although you may not, perhaps, climb the ladder of fame quite so speedily as you anticipated, you will assuredly see something of the world, have a freer existence, greater independence, and an increased confidence in yourself which it is difficult to attain whilst you stick in your old groove in this country.

But to return to Bert and myself.

As I have said, I resolved to see what I could do in the way of obtaining a helping hand out of our difficulty, and I remembered that among the friends I numbered was one who had been several times to the Cape, and had, I was aware, considerable influence in that part of the world. I called upon him the evening after Bert had so unwontedly attacked me.

He was good enough to say at once that he would give no advice upon the main question of going abroad, but, what was better, perhaps, promised to give me a letter to an old and valued Africander friend of his in Cape Town if we decided for ourselves to go to the Cape, adding that he considered the climate of South Africa second to none, and the prospects of the country good.

I returned to Bert with a light heart, feeling convinced that we had hit the mark at last, and in an airy sort of way asked him, after the style of an advertising house agent, what he thought of South Africa as a desirable place of residence; and, as a special inducement for him to entertain a favourable opinion of the expectant colony, I ran off a few of its attractions as related in my old geography book. But he rewarded me with a facetious sally.

"Oh yes! Of course I'll go to the Cape. Just after the war is over things will be so nice and quiet out there. We might even go to the Transvaal and talk over Majuba in a friendly sort of way with Kruger

and Joubert. Or we might settle in the Kalahari desert and live on pumpkins. So restful, you know, to have a country all to oneself and a few niggers, with a chastening prospect of being killed within a month by fever or ferocity."

"But, my dear fellow, I assure you that the country is thoroughly opened up, and quite civilised, and that the Boers ——"

"Are our white brothers, and peaceful peasants, possessing all the puritan virtues and a masterful knowledge of firearms. Yes, I know all about it."

"You are a great ignorant ass!" I exclaimed, in the warmth of my indignation, at the same time discreetly placing myself behind the biggest arm-chair in the room.

"Thank you," replied Bert, in his coolest and blandest manner, which always exasperates me far more than his volcanic outbursts.

"But all the same," he continued, "I am not going to be such a big one as to go to the Cape. If I cannot go to a white man's country I prefer to stay where I am."

There was no help for it. I felt he was too dense to be tackled in any other way, so I came from behind the chair and assumed a persuasive attitude.

"Oh! I am sure, old fellow, we shall fall across a European or two if we move around the country a little; and even if we don't, why, look how we shall be able to economise. And then there's just a chance

*hm* that the Africander friend of my friend, you know, may turn out to have a shade of white in him. At any rate, we might give the place a trial."

"Well, but what do you think we can do in a country like that, you cuckoo?"

"Why, go sheep farming, ostrich breeding, or diamond digging. There is sure to be plenty of scope for us without taking on desk work, anyhow; we won't do that at any price. And then, as we gradually develop the country, you might help things along by taking over the Premiership."

He was gradually coming round, and smiled graciously at the mention of a Premiership.

"Under the circumstances I'll consider it," he said grandiloquently, and the subject dropped until we met at luncheon on the following day, when he condescended to revert to it.

"I've been thinking over the Cape business, and have made a few inquiries about the advisability of going there, with a satisfactory result; therefore I don't mind going with you to South Africa on one understanding, and that is that you take the responsibility so far as concerns yourself, and promise you won't howl at me if things turn out ratty."

This was a decided concession to my views, and I accepted it gratefully. I said I would do or die entirely on my own hook, so long as he would only accompany me and witness the performance.

Thus it was settled that we should go to the Cape,

and to prevent any possibility of our neglecting to do so we agreed to hand in at once the required notice to our employers, solemnly acquaint our relatives and friends with the decision we had arrived at, and set sail for the promised land as soon as possible.

I can never clearly recall the events which took place during that last month we were in England, and immediately prior to our sailing in the early part of July. Confusion in our minds, and chaos in our lodgings reigned supreme.

All I can recollect is, that Bert (with his superior wisdom in all things appertaining to shipping) undertook to engage our passages, and was entirely successful in securing the two worst berths in the whole ship.

Our luncheon hours, I know, were devoted to the all engrossing business of getting our "kits" together, to the hunting up of people who knew other people somewhere at the Cape, and in discussing the progress we were each making in our respective preparations for departure.

For my part, I was pleased to allow the greater portion of my arrangements in the purchasing and packing up line to be attended to by the female branch of my relatives; and although, of course, they managed to stow away in the three meek looking travelling trunks a sufficient stock of boots, bath towels, breeches, brushes, and bric-a-brac to last an ordinary Christian a lifetime and a half, and fill a

decent-sized pantechnicon—still, on the whole, I think the result was more satisfactory than Bert's plan of consulting various colonial outfitters, and getting them to "fix him up."

His outfit, as he called it, was something unique and awe-inspiring in its way, and a casual inspection gave one the idea that the articles comprising it were the belongings of a belted and booted filibuster about to start off on a bloodthirsty marauding expedition. The objects of interest included a Martini-Henry rifle, a double-barrelled shot gun, a Colt's revolver, a cartridge belt, two pairs of riding breeches, a pair of jack-boots, a hunting knife, and a pith helmet that looked, in point of shape, not unlike the top of the Albert Hall. Then, of course, there were other trifles, such as ammunition, pocket flasks and filters, haversacks, knapsacks, pouches, and belts. Altogether it was a most imposing spectacle, and I suggested that he should place it on public view for a day or two, and so raise a little ready cash to buy a few things in the way of ordinary clothing, as there was no knowing how quickly the country might become civilised after we got out there, when a pair of trousers and a shirt or two might come in handy. He said he meant to be prepared for the worst at any rate, but, as I really thought it was advisable, he would add one or two commonplace things.

As the day of sailing drew near, and we were emancipated by our employers, we gave our whole

and undivided energies to receiving the final blessings of our friends, many of whom, by the way, brought little (?) parcels with them, when something like this took place, until we got used to it :—

“ Oh thanks, this is too kind ; really I ”——

“ Not at all, old boy. The girls thought you would like to take out something for them to dear old Ted, you know, who is out there. They think he is still in .Maritzburg or Port Elizabeth, but if he isn't you'll find him in Kimberley most likely, as he thought of going there, he said, in his last letter. At anyrate, you are bound to run across him.”

Or the following would transpire :—

“ I say, old chap, I wish you would take out this small parcel for me to Jack. It's awfully lucky you are going to the same place, isn't it ? He'll be so deuced glad to see you.”

“ But what part of the country is Jack in ? ”

“ Well, I can't say positively, because he has been shifting about rather of late ; but I know he is still south, so you are sure to knock against him.”

It was useless to expostulate, and it would have been the same had our destination been Calcutta instead of Cape Town, only we should then have loaded up sundries for the Punjaub, as we should be going to the same place, don't you see ?



## CHAPTER II.

THE SCENE OF WATERLOO—FAMILY DELEGATES—MISS PENELOPE PHUSSEE'S DEAR ARCHBISHOP—THE ANCHOR WEIGHED—OUR STATE (?) CABIN—BERT'S MOUSTACHE IN DANGER—MIND THE STEP!—COALING AT MADEIRA—INJURIOUS EFFECTS OF COAL DUST—FELLOW PASSENGERS—THE FAIRY—FLYING-FISH AND MERMAIDS—LAND AHEAD!

THE day of departure arrived at last.

The first stage of our journey was from Waterloo to Southampton, and, needless to say, it was made the most of.

The members of Bert's family were at the station to a man, or, more correctly speaking, to an infant, for his married sister's last was also there to give us a parting squall.



My own domestic contingent was of more modest dimensions, and only consisted of about twenty members.

Including relatives, friends, admirers, and followers, it was altogether a very affecting and satisfactory tribute to our popularity.

Delegates from our respective families having been appointed to accompany "the dear boys" as far as Southampton, and intimation conveyed to the railway

authorities that we were quite prepared to start when they were ready, the train steamed out of the station amidst the final blessings of our friends and the ovations of the assembled multitude.

The heavier articles of baggage had been sent down a couple of days previously for shipment in the hold, as directed by the shipping office folks, but the straggling odds and ends we now had with us were enough in all conscience, and required the assistance of three porters and a loafer, in addition to the male portion of the family delegates and ourselves, to lug them from the Southampton terminus to the steam tender waiting in the docks to convey ourselves and fellow-passengers down the Southampton Water.

The family delegates referred to consisted on Bert's side of a father, a brother, somebody else's sister, and an elderly maiden friend, who was doing great things for Bert by presenting him with a letter containing an introduction to a venerable ecclesiastic in Natal. The terms of this letter were as follows:—

MY DEAR ARCHBISHOP,

You will, I am sure, pardon the presumption, of which I feel I am guilty, in reminding you of your yet unfulfilled promise to buoy me up and sustain me with epistolary exhortations and spiritual advice during the period of your cruel exile (now lasting nearly three months) in the midst of the barbaric gloom which I am sure must surround you in that dreadful Africa.

We had, oh! such a delightfully earnest meeting last week at Dexter Hall, to protest against the Excessive Consumption of Pills by Kafirs, and next Thursday we hold our first annual meeting, at the same place, of the Society for the Propagation of

Porous Plasters among the Zulus. You are, I know, my dear Archbishop, deeply interested in these good movements, and your unavoidable absence, occasional only though it be, from our periodical gatherings will, I am sure, prove a great loss to the excellent cause of spreading enlightenment among the heathen, and protecting the dear grateful creatures from the wicked influence and cruelty of white brethren who ought to know better.

Casting, with a bleeding heart, my services at your feet,

Believe me, my dear, dear Archbishop,

Your devoted and admiring Sister in all good work,

PENELOPE PHUSSER.

P.S.—I had almost forgotten to tell you that we are unspeakably shocked at the recent atrocities perpetrated by those horrid corn-cutters on the toes of the poor dear natives in Matabeland, and we are most seriously thinking of protesting very strongly in the matter.

In truth, I had almost forgotten, also, to commend to your benevolent care the bearer hereof, a worthy and well-meaning young man, whose family I have known for many years. Being of a naturally pliable and gentle disposition, he has, I fear, been led into taking this terribly rash step by the worldly companion who journeys with him. I am sure he would have made his fortune if he had remained long enough in London. He would not, however, listen to myself or any other wise counsellor, but prefers the sinful guidance of the odious young man I have referred to, so pray, my dear Archbishop, do your best for the spiritual welfare of my *protégé*, and, if possible, utilise him for one of your own dear interesting missions amongst those poor dear dreadful black people.

P.P.

The family representatives on my side were only two; a parsimonious uncle, and my elder brother.

Soon the tender had transferred us, bag and

baggage, to the mail steamer which lay ready to sail, almost abreast of the great Netley Military Hospital.

How well I can recall that glorious summer's afternoon, when all Nature breathed of brightness; but yet within us there was a dull feeling of despondency at quitting our native land, our friends, our homes, for many a long day—aye, perhaps for ever! How difficult it was to gulp down the rising lumps in our throats, and put on a brave face, when the moment came for weighing anchor, and the ship's great bell clanged out a sonorous warning to those for the shore. Sisters sobbingly gave a parting kiss, brothers fervently clasped each other's hands for the last time, and amidst the bustle and din of scurrying sailors, rushing steam, and cheering men, the little tug hurried friends away back to shore.

Another few minutes, and the anchor was weighed, the Blue Peter struck, and we had commenced our voyage to the regions of the Southern Cross.

Slowly and majestically the big ship, her bows lifting cliff-high above the water, steamed down between the bleaching shingle banks and green woods of Hampshire, past the low rocky pinnacles of the Needles standing out below the sunny slopes and sandy inlets of the Garden Isle. Then, by the cold grey turrets of Hurst Castle into the English Channel,



along a stretch of smiling Dorset coast to Plymouth Sound. Here the remainder of our fellow-passengers, together with the mails, having been taken aboard, the ship's head was put to sea, the dear old cliffs of England were soon finally lost to sight, and we headed an uninterrupted course across the Bay of Biscay for Madeira.

Once fairly at sea, and our spirits returned to their normal state, we commenced to get perky, and take an interest in things.

The first thing I manifested any interest in was the shelf locker Bert had chosen for us. He called it a state cabin, but I think the state of his mind at leaving home, and the want of food, would account for that.

It was situated in what Bert nautically termed the afterpart of the grand saloon—the extreme afterpart, I should say, because there was nothing after us but the stern portholes and the ship's rudder.

The vessel's propeller vibrated under our feet to such an extent as to nearly dislodge from their natural position the few hairs on Bert's upper lip, which he was pleased to call his moustache, but which I called a cricket match—eleven a side—much to his disgust.

Only one of us at a time could occupy the floor of the crib after Bert's helmet and the rest of our traps had been jammed in; the other had to wait until the man in possession either came out again or stowed himself away on his shelf ("berths" the stewards

called them). Even then there was a particular way to move around, and as it was rather too much to carry about in our weakened minds, we wrote out the following instructions, and stuck them on the door:—

### WARNING.

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*Mind the step! Go sideways to the right on entering, and try to slam door to without skinning up against the trunk-end protruding from under lower bunk, or getting foul of wash-basin, and other standing gear to left. To turn round, dig feet in between black port-manteau and gun case, keep arms down, and don't smash mirror, or wipe things off clothes hangers, and beware of ten inches of helmet brim and bundle of rugs hanging out over foot of upper bunk. In putting on coat, shirts, etc., extend arms alternately through porthole. Open door and stick legs into saloon to get on trousers; if no ladies about, go into saloon bodily and do it. In climbing to top bunk, don't slip off weather board, mind keys, and don't stand too long on party's head in lower bunk. Don't try to lift upper deck with head, as it is fastened down.*

Four and a-half days after leaving Plymouth we arrived at the beautiful island of Madeira.

Unfortunately, night had fallen when we let go anchor off the town of Funchal, and as the coaling and replenishment of stores was completed by six

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o'clock the next morning, there was but little chance of landing, still less of seeing much of the place. Some adventurous spirits nevertheless did land, but, I should imagine, received scant satisfaction in return for the persecution and extortion practised upon them by the howling horde of rascally Portuguese boatmen who ply 'twixt ship and shore.

Bert and others stayed up the whole night through in a morbid state of subdued excitement at being in a foreign port for the first time in their life. It was pitch dark, and the ship's upper decks were smothered in coal dust from stem to stern, so I don't know where the fascination came in to remain hanging over the vessel's sides, or getting in the coolies' way all night, to say nothing of begriming oneself like a chimney-sweep.

I turned in, and at intervals during the night Bert came down to me and presented himself at the cabin door in a disgracefully filthy condition of coal dust, with a face as black as the ace of spades.

The first time he came fooling around in this way he awoke me out of a sound sleep, breaking my dreams of home, friends, and relations whom we had so lately left behind—it is only when a man's relatives are at a distance that he commences to dream about them. I, not unnaturally mistaking him for a thieving coolie sneaking round the cabins, threw a boot at him, which alighted somewhat forcibly on his nose, and followed it up with a pair of bath slippers, before I found out

who it was, when, of course, I apologised—at least, I asked him why the deuce he didn't turn in, instead of prowling about in the dead of night like that.

Afterwards, whenever he came down, something of this sort would take place:—

“Hey! I say, old fellow, it's only me. Why don't you turn out, and come up on deck? We are having an awfully jolly time of it.”

“Um-um-um-wateryouwant—um-um-gosleep.”

“Come and try Madeira wine—the real Mackay; some Johnnies in the smoking saloon are splitting a bottle or two they have brought from shore.”

With a blankety growl from myself, and a disgusted assertion from Bert that I was “beastly unsociable,” he would disappear; only, however, to return again at intervals of about half an hour.

At last, as time went on, the coal dust began to affect his voice most painfully. He came down for the thirteenth and last time at half-past five in the morning.

“Hey! shey o'man, shony me. Why doensher turn out an' come up'n deck. Hor'id co'dush maksh me horsh.”

I suggested that he should at once gargle his throat and lie down before the malady proved fatal. After a quarter of an hour's palaver he consented to occupy the lower bunk, which was mine, and required less climbing to get into.

Being quite too overcome by the coal dust to



observe the necessary instructions for undressing, he retired to rest as he was, and slept soundly until four o'clock in the afternoon, when Madeira and its abominable coal dust had passed from mind, certainly from sight.

From Madeira to Cape Town is nearly five thousand miles, and when, as in our case, neither Ascension nor St. Helena are touched at *en voyage*, very little of interest usually occurs to relieve the fortnight's interval of everyday board ship life.

North of Madeira the Cape liners fall in with the enormous stream of traffic which flows through the Straits of Gibraltar *en route* to and from north-west Europe, the Mediterranean, and the East, via the Suez Canal, and the continuously passing vessels afford abundant amusement each day to the passengers, who speculate upon the nationality, ownership, destination, etc., of the many craft.

To the south of Madeira, however, very little shipping is met with, and the mail steamers, in their straight run across the Gulf of Guinea and down the west coast of Africa, follow a trade route comparatively unfrequented; hence, with the solitary exception of the Canary Islands or Cape Verde, it often occurs that neither land nor sail is sighted until the Cape headlands loom up on the horizon, and announce the termination of the voyage.

With unceasing labour, and the perpetual throbbing of their mighty engines, these leviathans of the

deep plough their way, day in, day out, across the dreary waste of waters. It was scarcely surprising that a trek Boer, whom I afterwards met, should have so marvelled at the wonders of navigation as to ask me if the vessels took no time for rest nor outspanning throughout such prodigious journeys.

Our fellow saloon passengers, taken all round, had not much go in them.

Now and again in the evenings there would be a sickly effort made to get up a quarter-deck hop, or a smoke-room sing-song. Whenever the latter was attempted, there was one white-livered home-going colonial man who persisted in making everybody else miserable by wailing out the pathetically wretched song "Shall I ever see my home once more?" We stood it as long as we could, and then waited upon him in a deputation, and assured him that we had the captain's full authority for saying it was as near a certainty as possible that he would again see the home he was yearning for within the short space of a fortnight, if his heartstrings could only hold out as long, and suggested that in the meantime he might give our feelings a chance to recover.

A number in the second saloon were square-headed, polony-calved Hamburgers, who generally crowded away behind the cow-house on the upper deck and played "bang finger" all day.

For the rest, there were a few devil-me-care fellows, going out to join the Cape rifles; a pioneer contingent

of Salvationists, who smote hymns morning, noon, and night; and a party of Scotchmen, who made things cheerful by continuous ill-treatment of a set of bag-pipes.



Among the more noticeable characters in the rank and file of the steerage was a big fat Irishwoman, with thirteen children and a small husband. She was a Fairy!

Sea-sickness is bad anyhow, but I never saw anyone suffer from it as did the Fairy.

From the second day out, when she first made her appearance on deck, the old girl settled down to stay with her youngsters and a second-hand clothes shop, on the gratings of the fore hatchway, and made things buzz.

All she lived for, apparently, was to make it lively for other folks. When she wasn't hanging over the ship's side like a damp towel, scaring away water rats, she was grizzelling to know what the next meal was going to be, and wearing out her lesser fraction by keeping him on the trot, between herself and the galley, to find out when it would be coming along, as she said she was always hungry and could never get enough to eat.

The Fairy swore that she would be Irish stewed—or something to that effect—before she would go down

below, or move camp off the hatchway, until she arrived at Cape Town, and was for ever asking the admiring onlookers who chanced to be near her whether it was in sight yet.

"Shure now, and are we afther reaching there yit?" she asked, when we were near the Equator one day. Someone standing by suggested that she stood a better chance of reaching there than anybody else on board, if she didn't give in too soon; but the base innuendo fell harmless on the old soul, and the Fairy kept the ball rolling, sure enough, until she was put ashore at Cape Town.

Flying-fish are curiously attracted by light, in similar manner to moths, but I was somewhat sceptical about the yarns I had heard regarding flying-fish sailing in on their wings through open portholes, and plumping down on a ship's deck.

One hot night in the tropics, however, when Bert and myself lay sweltering in our cabin, trying to read, and had surreptitiously kept our lights going for the purpose after "lights out time," we were both rather startled by something whistling in through the porthole, and darting up against the cabin lamp.

In mid-ocean, on a calm tropical night, one does not exactly expect to be disturbed very much by winged creatures, and our first impulse, therefore, was to put it down as a little practical joke on the part of some forward, ill-mannered mermaids, who had so far forgotten their maidenly modesty, and the

sacred privacy of our chamber, as to gaze in through the porthole at Bert's godlike form, stretched, wreathed in smiles, on the top bunk, and after quizzing him to their naughty hearts' content, wound up their horribly fast goings on by pitching a stale Yarmouth bloater at us.

Of course, it was only a flighty flying-fish, and a fine specimen, too. I was quite prepared after that to believe a lot about flying-fish, even to their warbling a Norfolk canary out of time.

I don't know why the sailor boy's old granny should have thought he was telling her another while his mouth was warm, when he related about flying fishes.

"Ah! my lad, now you mustn't be for tellin' me them things, 'cause, y' know, yer poor ole granny ain't quite so stoopid yet. As long as yer sticks to facks, laddie, like about the lovely red colour of the seas where them wicked Pharaoh's men was drowned, or about the way that 'ere sea-sarpint took on, I believes yer. Aye, stick to facks, laddie, stick to facks."

When, after paying tribute to Neptune, we had bumped over the Line in safety, and the Southern Cross at last became visible in the heavens at night, the worst of the voyage was over. That is, we had passed through the greatest variations of currents and temperature.

The blow-hot blow-cold winds and cross-seas of the North Atlantic, and the extreme heat of the tropics, now commenced to give way to the more genial climate of southern latitudes.

As we approached the Cape, the south-east trade winds met us bow on, and, to some extent, eased down the vessel's daily average run.

The number of nautical miles traversed in the twenty-four hours, and the ship's whereabouts by latitude and longitude, were published by the captain, for the information of passengers, as soon after noon each day as possible.

Eagerly did every one look out for land in the afternoon of the day we were known to be within short steaming distance of Table Mountain.

All who could came up on deck and joined in the absorbing occupation of peering anxiously ahead for the first glimpses of South Africa.

Late in the afternoon, when the sun had set, and gathering clouds intensified the fast-growing darkness, the look-out man, with practised eye, discerned the distant headland looming up on the horizon.

Land ahead !

What infinite satisfaction is felt, and what a multitude of conflicting thoughts arise, when land ahead is at last announced, and the vessel approaches the shores of, to many, a new country !

A couple of hours more, and we steamed, in darkness, carefully through the narrow channel dividing the great leper settlement of Robben Island from the mainland, and dropped anchor in Table Bay.

### CHAPTER III.

WE LAND—BERT INTERVIEWS A GREAT FIRM—I MAKE THE ACQUAINTANCE OF AN "AFRICANDER"—UNDER THE SHADOW OF TABLE MOUNTAIN—RACIAL CONTRASTS—STRONG (!) FACTS ABOUT 'TOTTIES—I FALL ON MY FEET—A DAY'S SHOOTING—THE WAY TO SPEND A HAPPY DAY—RABBITS, CATS AND RATS—RETURNING FROM THE FRAY—BERT IS INSPIRED TO BECOME A MISSIONARY—A LETTER FROM BERT.

“SO this is the sort of climate you’ve brought me to. Nice, isn’t it ? ”

This was my greeting from Bert, when I followed that individual up on deck the morning after our arrival at Cape Town.

With the early morning tide, and whilst we were still between the sheets, the vessel had been docked, and of all the miserable, blue look-outs I had ever seen, this certainly did seem to be a masterpiece for an introduction to a new country. I felt that Bert, for once in his life, had just cause to growl, and for once in my life I was as mum as an oyster.

The rain was coming down in a way that savoured of the deluge, and the clouds, fog, or whatever it was, entirely enveloped the city of Cape Town and shrouded up Table Mountain.

We had hauled up alongside what I took to be a

coaling jetty, and the black slush ashore was ankle deep.

"I'll make a bet this state of things is chronic in the country. Shall you land?"

"Of course I shall, you dolt. What do you think I've come here for; to get the benefit of a sea voyage?"

This clinched him, and having raked together all our traps (including Bert's helmet), tipped stewards, settled accounts, and sworn eternal goodwill and friendship to everyone on board, we landed in South Africa, amidst the ovations of the assembled natives.

The military authorities omitted, for some reason, to fire the usual salute—perhaps because all their stock of powder was damp, like our feelings; or, maybe, they took us for German princes; but as they were good enough to display the Union Jack from the Castle as a sort of recompense, and to be on the safe side, we let it pass.

We made for an hotel, and, after luncheon, lost no time in presenting our respective letters of introduction.

Bert, after seeing the great shipping firm of Blurt, Blather & Co., told me he thought the shipping business at the Cape must be in a bad way. He had gone thoroughly into the matter—at least, the great man whom he interviewed had. This colonial Cræsus told him, in strict confidence, that the firm to which he lent his honoured name had lost millions—(he



didn't say what of)—since the opening of the Suez Canal, as the old East India trade, which in times gone by made the Cape a sort of half-way house, was now diverted through the land of the Pharaohs. Freights also, he complained, had gone down, and pickings were likewise limited, so he most sincerely trusted that the young man had not come to the Cape with any idea of, etc., etc.

Of course, Bert said at once that he had no such intention, but that, whilst he was completing a few personal arrangements prior to directing his sole efforts towards promoting the welfare of South Africa, he was agreeable, for a small remuneration, to assist in re-organising the office of Messrs. B., B. & Co., upon the latest and most approved London principles.

But the big man seemed to act up to the prevailing weather, and relentlessly threw cold water on Bert's proffered assistance, with the result that when the latter rejoined me I felt quite concerned about him, he looked so dreadfully out of sorts.

I fared better than did Bert, and received a right royal welcome from the party whom I went in search of.

I found the Africander to whom I was credentialled the very antithesis of my expectations. He was a fair-skinned, clear, grey-eyed descendant of Von Tromp. Fully six feet in height, possessed of an excellent physique, and withal a dignified bearing, he looked every inch a well-bred man, who was still on the sunny side of fifty.

This discovery of a white Africander interested me. I felt almost excited over it. When a man makes a discovery, he likes, if possible, to follow it up for the sake of the excitement. That is what I did, and in course of time I discovered further, that while "Africanderism" more essentially signifies what may be termed the Mahatmic element of European colonialism at the Cape, there is a fine democratic universality of feeling in the country, which allows those of inferior descent to attain this Mahatmic state on brotherly terms of mystic patriotism.

The same high principle underlies "Africanderism" that elevates the ambitions and awakens the nobler aspirations of every young American, whose bosom swells with honest pride as he contemplates the immensity of his citizen inheritance. The only difference is that "Africanderism" is more scopeful, more filling, more bosom-swelling. With everything in his favour, it is quite possible for any man, who can stand the strain, to become an Africander. That is, of course, any man located anywhere between Table Bay and the Gulf of Tunis, from Cape Verde to Guardafui—from the pot black aboriginal, right up through the whole gamut of half-castes, "snuff and butters," and doubtfuls, to the genuine pale unmixed, any high-class patriot may stand in.

I stood in for a while, but it gave me pains in the chest, and swelled head, so I backed down.

My introducee, who was a genial bachelor, had

amassed money in the palmy days by cattle speculation, but had subsequently launched out into various enterprises, until, at the time I arrived, the ramifications of his business, and the capital at his disposal, had given him a commanding position in the country.

Bert and myself were at once invited to transfer ourselves from the hotel to this worthy magnate's suburban residence, an arrangement in no way distasteful to either of us, especially to Bert, who declared, with truth, that to be quartered under a friendly roof the first night of our arrival in a strange land was excellent fortune, and possessed the additional merit of enabling us to avoid the disaster of incurring a heavy hotel bill.

The weather cleared on the second day after our arrival, and Table Mountain stood out in noble grandeur, like a huge square pedestal, immediately in the rear of the city, which is built on the shores of Table Bay, and has not infrequently, nor without reason, been called the "Naples of South Africa," with its white houses, beautiful sweep of bay, and balmy climate.

Cape Town contains a truly strange admixture of races. Side by side with the Puritanical descendants of the early Dutch settlers and French Huguenots, there has grown up a Malay population which continues to obey the teachings of Mahommed, with all the fanaticism of an Oriental race.

The native Hottentot has become the common slave of both European and Oriental.

The houses, built principally by the Dutch before the abolition of slavery, are exceptionally solid in construction, and primitive, if not uncouth, in design ; the stone walls are enormously thick, the roofs flat, and the frontages with their "stoeps," or uncovered verandahs, are plain, stuccoed, and whitewashed. The interiors are invariably cool, even in the hottest weather ; and the rooms, which are large and lofty, exhibit an extravagant amount of dark stained beams, wainscottings, floors, and ceilings.

Cape Town may well pride itself upon its situation and laying out ; both, indeed, leave little to be desired. A simple, but admirable, regularity seems to have been observed in building the city. The broad main thoroughfares run parallel, large open spaces abound, and with the gentle rise it takes, up the lower slopes of Table Mountain and the Lion's Head, the city, viewed from the bay, looks decidedly picturesque and wholesome—an impression, however, which is unfortunately dispelled to some extent by closer acquaintance.

For nearly a fortnight Bert and I rambled about at leisure ; everything was new to us, much was of interest.

What crowded minds were ours in those early days of arrival in brightest Africa ! What strange impressions and exploded ideas !

But, if the truth were known, I daresay after all

there was very little difference in the insatiable curiosity we exhibited and the erratic notions we possessed, and those of other full-blooded young Johnny Raws on their travels. Perhaps the only difference was that we carried our curiosity and catechisings to greater lengths, and bored more people, and showed a greater capacity for being "gulled," than we ought to have done.

The foreign element—to us—took our fancy most; that is to say, the Dutch, the Malays, and the niggers. They all spoke the same *patois*, and all called themselves "Africanders."

There were fair Dutchmen and dark Malays, dark Dutchmen and fair Malays, black Hottentots and white Hottentots; so one way and another it was slightly confusing for beginners.

The Malays and 'Totties were quite a new thing in humanity to us.

On Fridays,—and a good many other days for the matter of that—the Malays keep Sabbath, and do no manner of work. Those of the men who have distinguished themselves by making the pilgrimage to the Prophet's tomb at Mecca are known as Hadjies, are privileged to wear a turban, and on Fridays and feast days to swagger around bedecked like coloured illustrations out of a child's Scripture story book.

Malay women are particularly gorgeous in their get up, and in the way of colour take a lot of beating, in

ample bright emerald-green skirts, scarlet bodices, and brilliant orange-yellow silk bandannas, arranged sphinx fashion on their heads.

As for the Hottentots, in some respects they are a very strong race—they are even so at fifty yards from one in any quarter during a dead calm; but they come out best when they get the same distance to windward on a warm day, and under favourable circumstances have been known to knock down, with fatal result, the glutton who has sniffed the twang twice.

Intellectually and morally, the Cape Hottentot takes very little precedence of any of his fellow creatures in the scale of humanity.

Physically he appears to be the full-grown prototype of the dwarf Bushman who inhabits the country to the north-west, and the same low caste of features and almost animal instincts are traceable in both tribes.

I think it would be difficult to find a tougher individual than the Hottentot. He seems capable of standing anything in the way of corporal punishment—his head, which is somewhat harder than a wooden nutmeg, being used as a ram in tackling pugilistic adversaries, and any attempt to give him a white eye with bare knuckles usually results in the knuckles coming off second best.

Bert and I saw a Hottentot knocked down by a Scotch cart that was rumbling by one day. The wheel bobbed over his head, and jerked another 'Tottie,

who was standing up driving, clean out of the cart on to *his* head. It was a very exciting performance, and we thought the pair of 'Totties were done for; but before we had time to compare notes for the inquest, both niggers were on their legs again, undamaged, and wrangling about having got in each other's way like that.

During the short period that we were gentlemen at large in Cape Town we were privileged to enjoy (*sic*) a little shooting in the neighbourhood.

There is almost unlimited sport to be had in South Africa for the man who cares to look for it, and even as far south as the fairly well populated Cape districts, leopards—miscalled tigers—zebras, quaggas, wild cats, baboons, and jackals are still to be found; baboons and jackals, indeed, are so numerous in some parts as to cause the farmers considerable loss by their depredations.

Elephants also exist, although only in small numbers, in the Knysna forest, situated between Cape Town and Port Elizabeth, on the south coast, and very fine ones of the large-eared African species continue to be shot or captured from time to time.

The following lines, dealing with the chief characteristics of many of the principal animals found in South Africa, I have received from Bert; whether they are his own or someone else's I cannot vouch, but as like as not they are his—he has gone rather long haired and pensive of late :—

Afar in the desert I love to ride,  
With the silent Bush-boy alone by my side,  
Away! away from the dwellings of men,  
By the antelope's haunt, and the buffalo's glen;  
By valleys remote where the ourebi plays.  
Where the gnu, the gazelle, and the hartebeest graze,  
And the koodoo and eland unhunted recline  
By the skirts of grey forests o'erhung with wild vine;  
Where the elephant browses at peace in his wood,  
And the river-horse gambols unscared in the flood,  
And the mighty rhinoceros wallows at will  
In the pool where the wild ass is drinking his fill.

Afar in the desert I love to ride,  
With the silent Bush-boy alone by my side;  
O'er the brown Karoo, where the bleating cry  
Of the springbok's fawn sounds plaintively,  
And the timorous quagga's shrill whistling neigh  
Is heard by the fountain at twilight grey;  
Where the zebra wantonly tosses his main  
As he scours with his troupe o'er the desolate plain,  
And the fleet-footed ostrich over the waste  
Speeds like a horseman who travels in haste,  
Hieing away to the home of her rest,  
Where she and her mate have scooped their nest,  
Far hid from the pitiless plunderer's view  
In the pathless depths of the parched Karoo.

I never was, and probably never shall be, an ardent, soul-yearning sportsman. With—to use a familiar Yankee idiom—the usual “cussedness” of things, I suppose that is the reason why I have had more than a fair share of opportunities afforded me to display my prowess, and have been compelled to cart a gun around, and use one about a hundred per cent. more than the majority of men in this country who are always hankering after a “bit of sport.”



Whenever I have gone hunting, or shouldered a gun, I have done so because I could not very well help myself, and either to appear amiable and satisfy others, or else for the sterner reason that I had to shoot for my next day's "tucker." As a rule, I object to wandering about in any climate, much less a hot one, looking for animals I haven't lost, especially lions.

I may be understood, then, when I say that it was not altogether with feelings of unbounded joy that I found myself included in a party, got up principally for the edification of Bert and I, for the purpose of having a day's shooting at a place called Tigervlei (tigerpond), a few miles from Cape Town.

Bert, on the other hand, is an ardent sportsman (or pretends to be), and was consequently in the seventh heaven of delight at the prospect of airing the arsenal provided for him by the sanguinary London outfitters.

Springbok, a species of small deer, were what they told us we were going in search of. I made no further inquiries about the nature of the missing goods, but letting loose the remains of a smile I had left over from the previous evening, I meekly lugged my gun, and other small-arms apparatus, with me into the vehicle in waiting, a hooded Cape cart, and after faintly remarking that I thought it would probably be a fine day if it didn't rain, submitted to be carted to the field of slaughter.

The four of us who went from Cape Town were

joined on the hunting ground by two others, and after everyone present had given it as his emphatic opinion that it was just the right sort of weather, the best season, and the pick of the country for looking up lost property, we proceeded together to stalk the veldt, as the uncultivated lands are called in Dutch parlance.

We did this in open skirmishing order at about fifty paces apart.

From nine o'clock in the morning, when we started, until three in the afternoon, we meandered through South Africa in a broiling sun, without coming across any bigger game than a nest of white ants and a few six-inch sand lizards.

Just as I was mooning along about a quarter of a mile behind the rest, with a mouth as dry as a lime-kiln, and thinking what a real refreshing time "lifers" in Siberia were having compared to me, I had a good five years scared off my life by sprawling over the measely stump of a sugar bush, and exploding my gun, which I had been carrying, charged, at full cock.



For the moment I could not have sworn positively whether I had blown my own head off, or winged another man, or not.

I staggered to my feet in time to see the other

members of the party making for me from all directions.

I grasped the situation and my gun together, and in the twinkling of an eye commenced crouching along like a moonlighter.

"What have you shot? Where is it?" the fellows bawled, as they came running towards me.

"Hush! Don't make such a row. Lie low, lie low, and I'll have them yet."

"Have what?" came in sepulchral tones from behind sugar bushes and ant-heaps as the boys obeyed.

Now I knew if they found out that I had blazed off by accident, every man of them would have declared on the spot that the bullet had travelled in his particular direction, and been within an ace of killing him. This would not only have made the affair painfully embarrassing for me, and lowered my reputation as a sportsman, but it would wilfully have thrown perjurally wicked temptation into the way of those five other men—a consideration which made me squirm as I thought of it, and the moral teachings of my tender youth.

"Rabbits," I whispered.

"Rats! you Johnny! Who ever heard of rabbits round here?" answered a horribly familiar member of the party whom I had met for the first time in my life that morning.

"Phew!" chimed in Bert; "and he was going to murder them with a Martini bullet!"

I never experienced such an awful craving for gore as I did then, but by a mighty effort I overcame the homicidal tendency, and with an air of virtuous indignation gave up the moonlighting tactics, and asked how the dickens they thought I could save them the disgrace of returning home without anything if they yelled round me like a pack of schoolboys sparrow hunting with catapults.

At that supreme moment, when the outlook was rather blue, I was extricated from the difficulty by a stroke of good luck. From almost under our feet a big tiger-cat sprang up and made for a clump of sugar bushes near at hand, hotly chased by two dogs accompanying us.

We all scampered after the animals, and finding the quarry brought to bay by the yelpers, Bert, by common consent, was accorded the sole right of giving the *coup de grace*, and was requested to do so before the dogs' eyes were torn out.

Putting on side enough for a Queen's Prizeman, he prepared to bring off the calamity by thoughtfully ordering us to stand back. I placed myself flat on the ground immediately in the rear of him, muttered a short prayer, and awaited the worst.

As he levelled the gun somewhere in the direction of the country beyond, he shut his right eye, closed his left, and facing away over his shoulder, pulled the trigger.

Even with the terrific row the dogs were making

in trying to get at their game, and the blood-curdling, disgraceful language the cat was using in the centre of the bushes, there yet seemed an oppressive silence as the lock snapped and no report followed.

"I—er—I'm afraid there's something wrong with this wretched gun," said Bert, in a hollow voice, as he allowed the nice, free and easy, jolly fellow whom I had first met that morning to grab the weapon, snick a cartridge into the breech, and thrust it back into his hands before he could say stars.

"Phew!" I exclaimed; "and he was going to murder it with a Martini rifle without ammunition!"

"Try again, sharp, you noodle!" was the peremptory order from the pleasant man.

By this time Bert's face was the colour of a boiled lobster, and as he wobbled the gun once more into position somewhere near his chest, and adopted the same novel method of taking aim by closing his eyes and turning his head away, his attitude was suggestive of the schoolboy who ate too many green gooseberries.

Bang!

There was a frightful gurgling death howl from a dog, a groan from myself, and revolting execrations all round, as Bert missed the cat, potted a yelper, and reeled backwards on to me.

The awful things the man said who owned the deceased dog, and the terrible language the cat continued to use, would have worn the biggest Billingsgate porter who had attempted to keep up with it

away to a shadow. Fortunately, a little Sunday-school talk from me toned it down somewhat, and helped to make it harmless, by lessening the smell of brimstone, otherwise it is impossible to say what might have happened.

It made me feel quite faint, listening to the ghastly din, especially as Bert seemed in no hurry to raise himself off the small of my back, where he had been landed in a sitting posture by the kick from his gun.

Seeing it was probable that the cat would escape us, and a few more lives be lost, if the matter were left much longer to Bert, the pleasant man pilled the animal—the cat, not Bert—and settled the business.

When things had quieted down a bit, I explained, to the entire satisfaction of the party, how it was I mistook a tiger-cat for a covey of rabbits (I said covey because I thought it sounded better), and added :—

“Of course, I couldn’t quite tell what it was flying past me, but I knew it had hair on, and I fired point blank, quite point blank, as I hadn’t time to aim. I’m awfully glad I’ve been able to put something in the way of you fellows to-day, as it would have looked bad returning empty-handed, wouldn’t it ?”

Bert excused himself by saying he never was a good shot when he was hurried ; and when he had to shoot a ferocious thing, with a lot of people looking on, and worrying him, he couldn’t do it.

It was a fine, large, tawny tiger-cat that had fallen

to Bert's gun by proxy, and measured a good thirty-six inches from tip to tail. Although frequently the carcasses of such animals are left as they are shot, in the veldt, in this instance it was decided to secure the skin.

As we returned from the chase, with the glorious trophy slung between us, it was mutually conceded that it was better to have bagged a cat than nothing at all, and inwardly I blessed my lucky stars, also, that a cat had turned up, and saved me from letting a feline specimen of another sort out of the bag, and that I was safely delivered from the purgatory of one more day after a "bit o' sport."

Touring around Cape Town, and amusing ourselves generally, was all very well, but it was not exactly what we had come for.

We consulted our Africander host about the advisability of our going in for sheep farming.

We said we thought it would be so utterly nice, and such a delightful change, if we could only get a few sheep together, and go in for wool and mutton-breeding, away in some remote part of the country, where Bert could dress like a Texas cow-boy, and I could practise a little amateur kafir hunting on the quiet, and get my hand in for bigger things later on amongst the fiery, untamed tribes of the dark, the very darkest interior.

Instead of meeting with encouragement, however, our hopes were smothered in their infancy, and we

were advised that until we understood droughts, and other trifling difficulties incidental to sheep farming in South Africa, we had better leave it alone. There was something in that, as the monkey said when he put his hand into the tar barrel, so we left it alone—the sheep farming, I mean.



The question now was, What were we to do? Quill-driving was not to be thought of; we both agreed on that point. Misery! no! we would die first.

A few days later, and a fortnight after our arrival, our host offered me a clerical appointment, and, just to fill in the time, I accepted it.

Poor Bert expressed himself terribly disgusted with everything in general, and with me in particular; but, nevertheless, went another tilt at Messrs. B., B. & Co. for something less than a junior partnership, and, because he could not come to terms with them, he returned, and scared me by declaring his intention of going off round the coast, as there was no opening in Cape Town for a pushing young man like himself.

“Where shall you go to?” I queried.

“Natal, I think, and look up the worthy Archbishop, with this precious letter I have for him. Perhaps he can put me on to some missionary work among the Zulus.”

“My dear fellow, you are just the man for it, and—well, ahem!—as I don’t think I should make such



a very bad missionary myself I have half a mind to come with you. At anyrate, I'm yours affectionately if there's another opening in the good work, so don't forget to let me know."

And so it was that Bert and I parted for a time, but not before we had sworn to split the last fiver together, if worse came to the worst ; and Bert said it would.

I missed him dreadfully—especially his growling. It is wonderful how attached one can become to growling ; I mean, that the constant companion of a growler of the indiscriminate order misses the sobering influence so. Now, Bert at one time (he has fallen off lately) was the best growler I ever knew. He growled on principle, he growled impartially, and he growled at all times ; and when he didn't growl, I missed it more than I can tell, and knew at once that his system must be out of order, or that he was hysterical, or feverish and light-headed ; anyhow, that he wasn't quite himself.

He was one of those fellows who, to be consistent, would have growled if he had found himself in the ethereal regions (which was never likely), and would have complained about the clouds being damp, his wings being too large, and his halo not fitting.

About a fortnight after he left I received a letter from him. This was his struggle :—

MY DEAR O.,

Durban, Natal.

Am here. The little cockleshell of a coasting steamer nearly killed me. We called at Mossel Bay, Port Elizabeth, and East London.

From our deck I thought I made out a few houses and some people ashore at the first place, but I may have been mistaken. At Port Elizabeth I landed, well armed, and discovered a growing white settlement, with a very nice gaol, and a neat cemetery. East London is a suspicious-looking place, up a creek. I did not go ashore there. The weather was rough, and the shipping people proposed to use a steam crane and a magnified poultry basket in order to sling me clear of the ship's side, and slump me down in a barge, to be towed ashore. I said I would call again. We arrived here yesterday. The place looks hopeful, but I am not. I have seen the Archbishop, and handed him Miss Phussee's letter. He says I had better postpone the idea of seeking missionary work among the Zulus, and try to get temporary employment of some other kind for the present ; but what the deuce I am going to do I don't know yet, unless I go banana planting. Clerical work I won't take on at any price, and I think you were utterly mean to turn scribe again so soon after our arrival in this ideal country of yours. Pray don't write to the folks at home until you are doing something better to keep the rags of our reputation up. Meantime consider me

Yours to a cinder,

BERT.

P.S.—Since writing the foregoing this morning, a chum of the Archbishop's has offered me a billet in his office, and as I don't care to hang about doing nothing, I think, while I am looking round, that I shall put in a day or two at the desk, as it is a nice, genteel, respectable occupation, and does not take it out of a fellow so much as most work does in a warm climate like this.

B.

## CHAPTER IV.

BOER TOBACCO AND ITS EFFECTS—CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR  
IN SOUTH AFRICA—VITICULTURE AT THE CAPE—ASCENT OF  
TABLE MOUNTAIN—FRIEND EVES THE FARMER—THE FUNNY  
SIDE OF OSTRICHES—"A LITTLE HELP WORTH A DEAL OF  
PITY"—WINE MAKING—I PERFORM (OUT OF LONDON) ON A  
BUCK HORSE—A FEW STUBBORN FACTS.

**L**EFT to myself, I soon settled down, and before long felt quite an old colonial.

I commenced to pick up and patter Dutch, to eschew fancy tobaccos in favour of Boer twist, and in various other ways to deport myself as became a trusty employee of an Africander, and a quasi-member of his family.

Smoking Boer tobacco rather upset me at the start. It looks, in the uncut state, like a small coil of Manilla rope, but when cut up it resembles brown tea, if there is such a thing as brown tea.

For a man who has been accustomed to whiff the fragrant products of Havannah and Virginia, it is difficult for a while to get much satisfaction out of Boer tobacco. The amateur cannot ram enough into an ordinary pipe to last more than five minutes at the outside—that is, after he has learnt how to keep it alight at all, for to do this is a trick in itself; and to

the beginner the stuff seems to require an air-pump to help draw.

The smell of Boer tobacco-smoke resembles a blend of burning rags and bonfires.

I brought some of this tobacco home with me for distribution among my friends, but they didn't seem to appreciate it.

A bilious youth of seventeen winters, a brother of an intimate friend of mine, got hold of some. He was found shortly afterwards in nearly a moribund condition, lying on the hearthrug, with his head hanging over the fender rail, and his eyes turned ceilingward, with a vacant, far-away look in them.



Another unpleasant little incident occurred to one of my friends whilst smoking a pipeful in a railway carriage.

He was all right until a fussy old gentleman came into the same compartment, and commenced sniffing and snorting. My friend G., being of a sensitive and retiring disposition, immediately thrust his pipe into his pocket, and made a sickly effort to look as though he couldn't smoke if he tried.

The elderly party, however, continued to fume, to rustle his paper irritably, and to glare across the carriage at G. At last, with a snort, he broke the painful silence.

"Tut ! tut ! there is a most atrocious smell of burning in this compartment. Do you notice it, sir ?"

G. nervously replied that he noticed nothing unusual, but added that that was probably accounted for by his having a slight cold in his head.

"Something is on fire, sir ! We had better signal the guard to stop the train."

Of course, G. said to himself it was only the vile Boer tobacco he had been idiot enough to smoke, and began to feel wild and warm—especially down his back—about the peppery old boy making such a fuss over a trifle.

"Don't do that, sir, you will alarm the other passengers. Perhaps it is only a curious kind of tobacco you smell, maybe a costermonger was the previous occupant of the compartment," faltered G.

"Perhaps it is eau-de-cologne ; maybe it is incense ; but I should say it is your coat tails, young man," jerked out the old irascible.

"Great Scott ! why the blazes didn't you say so before, then," roared G., jumping up, and clutching hold of the smouldering remnants in his rear.

Sure enough, the hastily-deposited pipe, with its live tobacco, had set him on fire, and burnt a hole in his pocket big enough to get his head through. After that, he maliciously said Boer tobacco was not fit to smoke in public—you never knew when you might want to put it out of sight, so that it shouldn't hurt anybody.

When my first colonial Christmas under the Southern Cross came round, it appeared singularly strange to me to be spending it beneath a cloudless blue sky and a blazing sun. The long days, the hot nights, the picnic parties, and the donning of airy apparel, all made the season so peculiarly different to the English wintry scene which I pictured to myself far away across the sea.

New Year is looked upon, and held, as a far more festive season at the Cape than Christmas, as in Scotland ; although, of course, Christmas meets with due recognition.

The two most important gala events of the year to the Africander's mind are, undoubtedly, New Year's Day and his or her birthday. Both are red-letter days, and any omission on the part of a relative, a friend, or a servant, to pass the seasonable compliments, and pay due and proper homage to superiors, is looked upon as an unpardonable offence. These are, also, occasions for a great amount of hand-shaking, or rather, for a fulsome, sleepy paw-dabbing, which takes its place.

For one New Year's picnic we went to a wine farm at Constantia, a place close to Cape Town, from whence the best of Cape wine derives its name.

This is only one of the many districts in the Western Province of Cape Colony where viticulture is undertaken on an extensive scale ; but, perhaps, it is the best known of any on account of the high

standard of excellence attained by its wine growers in the production of certain classes of wine.

Much has been done in recent years, both by private enterprise and Government aid, to induce the Cape wine growers to produce an article worthy of exportation, and, to some extent, success has resulted.

Until a comparatively recent date, Cape wines were scarcely known outside the country ; but now, thanks to the persistent and laudable efforts of the Government, and the astuteness of one or two large Cape houses, which have established branches in England and on the Continent, the Cape wine growers have at last found the European markets opened to them, and, be it said, they are finding their wines gaining public favour in this and other countries.

Phylloxera, and lack of technical knowledge in the wine-making itself, have combined to handicap the Cape wine industry to a very serious extent. Within the last few years, however, an European expert has been engaged in promoting, at Government expense, a more intelligent treatment of the vintages, and, by stringent enactments and wholesale destruction of affected vineyards, the dreaded phylloxera has been kept under, if not altogether exterminated.

Similar, but, perhaps, less earnest attempts have also been made to induce the tobacco growers of the country to improve the character of the native weed, but these have, apparently, proved abortive, through the dogged obstinacy of the farmers in clinging

to old and obsolete methods of production and manufacture.

Boer tobacco has been declared by American authorities to be capable of holding its own in any market, if only greater intelligence were brought to bear in its cultivation, and less pre-Adamite ideas adopted in its preparation.

Another party, of which I was one, undertook the ascent of Table Mountain during the New Year holidays.

We were accompanied by, and under the guidance of, a local mountaineering celebrity, who made the four thousand feet climb a regular Saturday recreation, and, together with his brother, had distinguished himself by saving life on the summit, which is treacherously liable, during some portion of the year, to become suddenly enveloped in a cold, wet mist, rendering it excessively dangerous for a person not well acquainted with the mountain to attempt its exploitation.

Viewed from the city below, the great frowning mass, with its bare, wall-like sides, looks well-nigh impregnable; indeed, it is difficult for a stranger to suggest any means of reaching the top. This is only the result of casual observation, for, as a matter of fact, the mountain is accessible from various points, and, curiously enough, that most available from the Cape Town side is situated on its precipitous and forbidding front, and is a narrow lateral gorge known as Kasteels Poort.



Commencing our ascent in the cool of early morning, in three hours' time we had reached the summit, just as the sun was rising and ushering in another hot day.

It was gloriously exhilarating standing there on the topmost ledge of the mountain, looking down on the still sleeping city below us, and inhaling the fresh morning breezes as they wafted in across the South Atlantic away on our left. From our coign of vantage on the south side we obtained a magnificent view of the lovely bay, with its shipping riding peacefully at anchor, and the distant Blauwberg Mountains forming a noble background, as they stood out in bold relief across on the northern shore.

The docks, wharves, and jetties, the railway winding away inland to the right, and the many other sights and signs of a busy civilised community, all added to the charm of the scene, and engaged the attention of the observer.

Particularly and curiously beautiful were the silver trees on the hill sides below us, as their wonderful, satin-like leaves scintillated in the morning sunlight.

These silver leaves are much prized for artistic purposes, and, adorned with miniature paintings of landscapes, etc., a great number of them are sent by colonists to their friends in England as local mementoes of Christmas and New Year.

After spending some hours in rambling about and exploring the rocky hollows and recesses of the

summit, we descended once more to the level of ordinary humanity by the Constantia side of the mountain, through one of the many well-kept vineyards already referred to.

As I simmered down in my colonial home, my circle of new friends and acquaintances increased, and among others I was fortunate enough to meet with a typical young English colonial, whom I will call Eves.

He was a man of exceptional ability and intelligence, and had only recently been awarded the Cape University Chancellor's gold medal—the only one granted for some years—for a singularly clever treatise on "Scientific Agriculture as applicable to the Cape."

Eves was going in for mixed farming on a large scale, about seventy miles from Cape Town, and here we spent some jolly times together.

It was on his farm that I first saw and experienced something of up-country life in South Africa. Here it was I first mounted—and quickly dismounted—a bucking gee-gee, learnt the ins and outs of ostrich farming, lent a hand at raisin making, and made acquaintance with snakes, caught baboons, shot buck, trapped jackals and tigers, and in various other ways amused myself—not altogether unprofitably, as things afterwards turned out.

Comparatively few men in the country continued ostrich farming on anything approaching an extensive scale, after what might be called the late ostrich "boom," which half ruined the sheep farmers, who

were enticed from their legitimate pursuit of wool growing by the promise of larger profits in the raising of feathers.

Feathers fly up and down the scale of marketable value in a manner to make a sober business man's hair stand on end, and the freaks and follies of fashion hold everyone concerned at their mercy.

My friend Eves was one of the few who continued in the hazardous business of producing plumes for the adornment of the fair sex, and he possessed about fifty pairs of valuable birds.

Ostriches are curious creatures in many respects, but in none more so than waltzing.

In this they excel, and frequently the giddy, frivolous young things may be seen curveting with perfect grace and rhythm when they are turned into their camps in the morning. I have seldom witnessed a more grotesquely comical sight than a number of these immense birds, with their luxuriant plumage extended, and half floating on their wings, half stepping, swirling round with rapturous regularity.

An ostrich is all right when you know him, but—you had better know him first.

For instance, it is never well to go too near to him with anything about you that glitters too much, such as jewellery, an eye glass, or even a glass eye, as he is apt to crane forward with his long neck and gobble it down before you can say twinkle. I knew a man who lost an eye and a diamond pin this way once.

Indigestion is unknown to the ostrich—except to the one in the Zoo; I won't answer for him, he looks consumptive and fluffless, poor thing. Nostrums for dyspepsia would have a bad market if they had to rely on ostriches. Nails, rusty bolts, scraps of second-hand mangles, or bits of old hoop-iron they take to with more or less relish, and as for retired boots or bleached bones, they are received with zest as succulent dainties.

When the birds are nesting, the males are often extremely dangerous, and liable to attack anyone incautious enough to approach them. If successful in getting to close quarters they deliver a forward kick of terrific force, inflicting an ugly ripping wound with their large talonous toe, and frequently with fatal result.

As some protection against probable attack at such seasons, those working amongst the birds occasionally carry an abbreviated clothes-prop, with which they easily manage to keep the creatures at leg's length by thrusting at their necks.

Another manœuvre to escape harm when attacked by a wrathful ostrich is to lie prostrate on the ground until assistance arrives. The only drawback to this arrangement is that nine chances to one the fool of a bird takes your head for a prospective member of his family, forthwith slumps down on it, and puts in an hour or two in attempting to hatch it. I heard of a poor bald-headed old party who had an especially bad

time of it in this way. A big male bird settled down on his cranium for close on five hours, I'm told, and only gave up the job in the end when he turned round to see how things were getting along, and found the old boy's mouth open—he thought the shell had burst. The party himself has been addle-headed ever since.

It was the ostriches' nesting season on one occasion that I was staying with Eves.

I had more than once mildly remonstrated with him about passing through the camps; not that I objected to his going, so much as I did to being cajoled into accompanying him.

We always managed to forget the clothes-props—the protecting prongs—and the addle-headed man's bad time would be sure to turn up in my mind just as we arrived fairly in the middle of the largest enclosure.

One day things came to a climax, as I always expected they would.

We were coming through a camp, when I noticed a group of male birds in a far corner eyeing us with evident distrust, and I nervously drew my companion's attention to the fact.

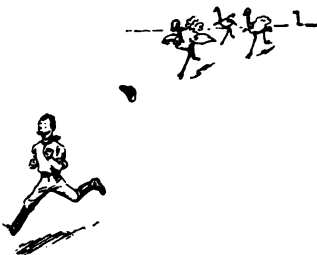
"Oh, they won't hurt us. Very tame birds those," said Eves.

The next moment two of the said tame birds made a start in our direction. Eves said they were only waltzing.

"Well, I'm going to waltz too."

Saying this, I spurted for the nearest cactus hedge, which fenced in one side of the enclosure in front of us. Eves followed.

The brutes scudded over the ground like wind, and it was a case of devil take the hindmost. Eves was taken.



Ye Gods!

Prithee say then which was who,  
For his reserve was gone and his breeches too.

I continued to waltz for the cactus hedge, in the hope of securing a stick wherewith to protect myself and rescue Eves. Gaining the fence in immediate advance of one of the ostriches, I was most kindly assisted over by a lift from behind that shot me half-a-dozen yards into the paddock on the other side, the cactus thorns in my flight scraping me down as mercilessly as a brass besom.

When I pulled myself together, and looked back into the camp, I could see that Eves was kicking on the ground, like an inverted Highlander, with one of those infernal fire-eating ostriches roosting peacefully on his head. I could not find a stick at first. By the time I did, and had rescued him, he must have been close on hatched; at any rate, he had been sat on long enough, and said he thought perhaps after all it was a little risky to go into the camp unarmed.

Eves, who made a great feature of his vineyards, invited me to the farm one grape-picking season, and I saw the whole performance through, from the gathering of the grapes to the drinking of the wine.

What tons of juicy grapes were carted in from the vineyards to the pressing vats near the homestead ! What a bustle everyone was in ! Hottentots, Kafirs, and "snuff and butters," scurrying hither and thither, loaded with the luscious fruit ! Niggers jabbering, women scolding, brats howling, dogs barking, mules kicking, and Baas Eves praying ! Truly it was an animated scene.

This lasted nearly a week, and each day I made myself as scarce as possible, under the shade of an orange tree, in the vicinity of a pile of grapes, and watched proceedings.

Wine-making in South Africa is, I daresay, a very little less inviting process than in European or other countries, but even then it is not appetising; although they are above the nasty little habit they have in certain well-known wine-producing islands which shall be nameless.

In these islands an undying belief obtains in the infallible curative properties of fresh grapes and grape juice, otherwise termed the "grape cure," and occasionally during the wine season, in critical cases of fever, and kindred maladies, the patients are steeped to their necks in the liquor, which is afterwards,

perhaps, to find a name in the world as a full-bodied port with a faultless bouquet !

At one time I imagined that wine-making was a nice, clean, delicate business. Visions of "nectar divine, bright sparkling wine," and the pretty pictures displayed by big wine merchants—where romantic youths and heavenly maidens are engaged in some sunny Southern vineyard—quite disassociated my mind from the good old Egyptian wine-press way of doing things.

What I saw was very different.

The grapes were thrown wholesale into the enormous round stamping vats, dirt, stalks, and all, just as they came from the vineyard. A couple of half-naked, bare-footed Hottentots, then jumped into each vat, and squish-squashed a dance, bellowing a war song the while, over them, until they were tired, when other pressers took their places.

As the juice was squeezed out of the fruit in this manner, it was drawn off from a bung-hole in the bottom of the vat, and taken away in buckets to the storing sheds, where the process of fermentation and doctoring was in due course completed.

From the residue of skins, stalks, and jimmy-jam which remained in the vats, dop brandy was afterwards distilled, and a very excellent and pure spirit it rendered.

Certain classes of grapes were reserved for raisin-making, and when all was ready, Eves, in accordance



with the prevailing custom, sent word round to one or two neighbouring Dutch farmers, and they, on the appointed day, turned up with every chick and child they possessed.

Raisin-making permits of no delay. The fresher the grapes are picked, and the quicker they are prepared for dipping and drying, the better; so the opportunity is taken of assisting each other, and at the same time of making it the occasion of friendly intercourse between the families of the district.

Every man, woman, and child, and "the stranger within the gates," had to turn to—myself among the rest.

The grapes were piled up in miniature mountains, and, squatting round them, armed with knives and scissors, it was our duty to carefully examine each bunch separately, and nip off any grape that was in the slightest degree unfit—either crushed, unripe, or rotten.

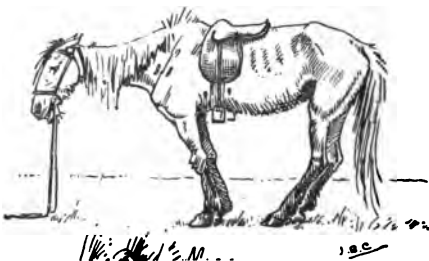
It was during this same visit, and after grape gathering, etc., was over, that I made an equestrian clown of myself.

The average Africander cherishes the idea that he is a Heaven-sent non-such horseman, or one of a race of Fred Archers, and that it is absolute presumption upon the part of "uitlanders," especially young Englishmen, to pretend to know anything whatever about a horse. When, therefore, one of the Dutchmen, who had been assisting at raisin-making, bantered me

before the assembled clans, I felt a bit riled, and offered to show him how to ride his own animal. He gave me to understand that he doubted my ability to stick on the thing's back, much less ride him; but I took this for more banter, and facetiously requested that the quadruped should be trotted out, and myself lifted on to him. As things worked out, it would have been more satisfactory if I had put in the time on a Chinese Grammar.

Anyhow, there was no getting out of it. The ghastly object was hauled along, and held together in front of me, to climb on to.

To see the fiddle-nosed, groggy-kneed, wall-eyed brute standing there, with a saddle round his lean ribs that kept them from rattling, and looked like a pad-plaster in the wrong place, made me smile.



I gave a final smile, and then threw myself jauntily into the plaster—the saddle—with the airy grace of a yellow-back hero.

Whether the miserable fossil's feelings were injured, or whether I touched him on the "raw" (he had a lot), I don't know, and anyway, the result was the same. He tucked his head away

between his forelegs, buckled up his back, and let rip like a blizzard.

It was two to one, bar one, lay on the field ; the event was exciting, and I got off, over the front end where the beast's head ought to have been, and—laid on the field.

When I picked myself up, that mangy, paralytic, foot-in-the-grave, depraved sinner of a horse was standing as quiet as a lamb, and looking as meek and mild as a young curate at a christening.

I tried him again, but it was no go ; I curled under him somewhere and landed between his legs, all in a heap.

As soon as I could find a chuckle-head in the onlooking crowd who had finished laughing, and was sane enough to answer me, I gathered that I had been performing—out of London, too—with a regular bounder of a buck horse, and that the Dutchman who owned the hide-full of wickedness was the only man around in those parts known to have remained on his back more than five minutes at a spell ; so I felt satisfied, and retired from the contest—hurt.

Before I finish with a kindred subject, let me give Africanders in general, and Dutchmen in particular, credit for knowing how to handle mules.

If they could not exactly hold their own at horsemanship on Newmarket Heath, they would be able to give the lads there a wrinkle or two as muleteers.

Few people in this country know what an amount of concentrated essence of devilment is to be found in a team of twelve or fourteen mules—vice is no name for it.

To inspan the brutes to a transport waggon without getting one's legs splintered is a feat. The quantity of expended energy on the mule's part would drive an Atlantic liner from Liverpool to New York, and back again.

I have witnessed some pretty sights with mules.

I have seen a couple of Dutchmen persuade a team of mules to be inspanned and trot off in spanking style in five minutes, and I have seen a pair of Johnny Englishmen floundering around at the same job, with a similar turn out, for three quarters of an hour, and at the end of that time, not only as far off closing the transaction as ever, but still struggling in the middle of a hopeless heap of tangled, knotted harness, and kicking muleflesh.



## CHAPTER V.

SLOW TIMES AT THE CAPE—THE BANKS AND THE FARMERS—A  
FLUTTER IN DIAMOND STOCK—VISITATION OF SMALL-POX—  
HORRORS OF LEPROSY—SPECIMENS OF THE  
GENUS "LOAFER"—MOSAIC-ARABS AND THEIR  
PECULIAR "LEETLE" WAYS—ROUTE OF THE  
TIMBUCTOO-JERUSALEM RAILWAY.



ULL times prevailed throughout South Africa from about the year 1882 to the commencement of 1886, when the development of discoveries on the De Kaap Gold Fields in the Transvaal ushered in a return of commercial vitality, and slowly, but surely, trade revived, fresh capital commenced to flow into the country, and the people at last awoke, as it were, from a long period of lethargy and depression.

The almost general state of bankruptcy in which more particularly the Cape Colony was involved during the years mentioned, was in main part due to the utter lack of intelligent sympathy displayed by the leading banking institution in the country towards the farming population.

Compelled to seek assistance, owing to successive

bad crops and droughts, and further pinched by the general depression which was beginning to manifest itself in 1882, the farmers turned to the banks, and were only too readily bolstered up by them with heavy advances against land, stock, and crops.

Scarcely a farmer in the country but who became largely indebted to one or other of the banks, many to almost a hopeless extent.

Instead of consistently following up the policy they had themselves inspired, or waiting with at least some degree of patience for better seasons and improved times before endeavouring to convert once more into hard cash the mass of paper they had accepted in its place, the principal bank, with a despotism and stupidity scarcely credible, entered upon a ruthless campaign against men who had been lulled into a false sense of security by a generosity of treatment which was, it proved, too good to last.

Forsooth, the unfortunate farmers had been living in a fools' paradise. On all hands the ukase went forth, and Shylock demanded his pound of flesh.

Other financial corporations of less power and influence had, perforce, to follow suit in the scramble to realise, and soon the country was in a deplorable state of semi-bankruptcy, through the inevitable failure of the farmers to meet their engagements.

The outcry indeed was bitter against the unpopular institution mainly responsible for the ruin of scores of men, who could and would, with reasonable

grace given them, have honourably extricated themselves from the slough of financial difficulty they had sunk into so unsuspectingly; and strenuous efforts were made at the time by the Africander section of the community, which had principally suffered, to promote a kind of national bank, to be conducted on more popular lines, and in avowed opposition to the Gaelic monopoly so much in disfavour.

For obvious reasons, such efforts were futile, and the bank it was sought to overwhelm continues to hold the golden sceptre of finance in South Africa, with a firmer grasp and greater austerity than ever, and has lived to witness the disastrous collapse of no less than four rival institutions within the last decade.

The farmers, however, were not the only ones to suffer ere the tide of misfortune reached low ebb.

Over-speculation in diamond stocks caused many failures. Individual claim-holders in the Kimberley diamond mines of Griqualand West were one by one continuing to transfer their properties into the hands of public companies formed specially for that purpose, with large capitals, and the opportunity afforded by the mercurial state of the local share markets in consequence was far too tempting for many ambitious spirits to resist.

Harking back to the dismal results attending this speculation in diamond shares, it is difficult for the casual student of events to understand how it was that South Africa, within five years, should again

yield so readily to the still more feverish excitement of a gold boom, and enter into it with the "neck or nothing" callousness of California in the early days.

In numberless instances, the identical men who were bitten most severely in the diamond flutter of ten years ago have been the chief victims of worthless gold scrip.

A serious visitation of small-pox occurred in South Africa towards the latter part of 1882, and tended to aggravate the prevalent financial distress.

Many hundreds of the population succumbed to the fell disease, and, as might be expected from their habits and mode of living, the Malays and natives were the principal victims.

From a dread of being sent to the public lazarettos, erected outside the towns and villages affected, and a superstitious aversion to forego, even under such extreme necessity, the washing and handling of the dead, in accordance with Mahommedan rites, the Malays caused infinite trouble and anxiety by the cunning subterfuge with which they concealed from the authorities as long as possible the prevalence of the loathsome pestilence in their houses and hovels.

Herding together in their dwellings, they showed as little regard for sanitation or morals as the pigs they affect to abhor as unclean; and it is scarcely to be wondered at, therefore, that they contracted and spread broadcast the most virulent type of small-pox known to medical men.



Upon the first appearance of the epidemic in the country, the Dutch farmers took fright, isolated themselves away on their farms, closed their doors on strangers, disinfected themselves and their families almost to death, and refused to have more to do with the outside world than they possibly could help.

As with small-pox, so it has been with leprosy among the coloured population at the Cape. Conform to the laws of God or man they will not, if they can by any means avoid doing so.

Perhaps there is no disease more terribly loathsome, more lingering in its progress of corruption, more hopelessly certain of fatal termination when once it lays its clammy hand of death upon its victim, than leprosy.

There is, unfortunately, a great deal of this dread disease at the Cape, among the lower-class Orientals and natives. The leper settlement on Robben Island, a small, arid patch of land situated opposite Cape Town, on the north side of Table Bay, and the place, also, of the public asylum for lunatics, is one of the largest of its kind in the world, and a credit to the authorities for the systematic segregation of the patients, and humanity in their treatment, which has characterised the establishment of late years.

Until the law was enforced rendering it compulsory that leprous subjects, and those afflicted with elephantiasis and such-like cutaneous diseases, should be reported and conveyed to Robben Island, it

was a common sight, as it still is in less civilised parts of Asia, to meet in public places revolting spectacles of human suffering, who were not only left free to sicken the eyes of their fellow creatures, but permitted to disseminate disease by marriage. Even now, as I have already intimated, the authorities have to contend against a conspiracy born of religious fanaticism and brute ignorance, in endeavouring to prevent the propagation of the scourge.

But to return to other matters.

Yes, those were altogether very secondhand times for South Africa, and "Spes Bona" was in a bad way—what with bankrupt farmers, rotten diamond shares, wrecked ostrich breeders, and other attendant evils of cancelled credit and absent cash.

Those were times when every other man you met was "stoney"—when new acquaintances fell on you thick and fast, insisted on becoming familiar, and then showed their entire confidence in you by requesting the use of a sovereign, "only until I get some change, you know." Those were days at the Cape when to be flush was foolish, to be gay was godless.

The professional loafer was in evidence everywhere, deriving all the benefit he could while the times were with him; and a sound knowledge of his business enabled him to fleece his fellow creatures on the painless system. You could not very well tell him to go hang, because the times were hard; you could not tell him to try the workhouse, because they

are unknown institutions in the colonies; and there was next to no work going on, so it was rather rough to tell him to go and look for it. No; there was no way out of it but to follow suit, and be hard up yourself, wear old clothes, a hang-dog look, and a general air of desperate depression, as if, say, some kind departed friend, with eccentric ideas of leaving his money, and a large number of mercenary, quarrelsome relatives claiming it, had gone away, forgetting you except in making you his sole executor.

But the swagger loafer is the class of filcher who always seems to thrive best in a genial foreign climate.

This worthy frequently has the appearance of a broken-down aristocrat, occasionally sports an eye-glass, and waxes the ends of his luxuriant moustache to points that look sharp enough to pierce a cowhide.



Sometimes he says he is a scion of a noble family, and has great expectations when his aged father "shuffles off this mortal coil," when his deceased brother's sickly son dies, and when the wife of his long-lost second brother and her two children go touring in the States, and also get lost.

If you suggest that these are rather remote probabilities, he looks as straight down his classical nose as a yard of pump water, and reiterates his assertion

that he will succeed to the peerage and be wealthy beyond the dreams of avarice very shortly, however unwilling he may be to have it thrust upon him at the cost of losing his dear relatives; and the fortunate individual whom he may favour now by accepting temporary accommodation from will then assuredly reap a golden harvest of reward. He winds up by telling you that a "fiver" will do the trick for the present, and although, "'Pon my honah, deah fellah, it isn't necessary, don't you know," he offers, as a special inducement, a bit of signed paper for it. If you were the cent.-per-cent. blood-sucking usurer he has been accustomed to appeal to in the old country, he could not treat you with more kindly condescension.

Swagger loafers must not be confounded with the wastrel class of men mentioned in a preceding chapter.

The S. L. is not often journeying to the dogs, or, if he is, he is taking it by easy stages, and making himself remarkably comfortable over it. As a rule, he gives it out that he left the old country entirely and simply for the benefit of his health, and just to fill in the time pleasantly, until he falls in to—no, not into debt—the title and estates of his ancestors.

He is frequently a dangerous cue at billiards, a nimble hand at cards, and a keen-witted fellow at all times. He seldom drinks to excess, knows the art of dressing to perfection, and carries it into practice, so far as his precarious finances will admit, on all occasions.

He is a counterfeit swell, a veritable Captain Pink ; perhaps more dangerous beneath the skin, but less vicious on the surface, than your helpless human derelict ; and, to sum him up at his own price, he is all pedigree and no money—like others I wot of not a hundred miles from Hampton Court and Kensington ; and pays, if possible, as little for his accommodation as they do.

Another similar type of individual to the S.L., and a man more commonly met with, and less presumably blue blooded, is the “ expecting-a-remittance ” man.

You meet him everywhere abroad and in the colonies. I was never in a place outside England yet where he was not to be found, and he never requires much finding.

Like the S.L., he is also of the genus loafer ; but, as a distinctive feature, usually combines a little industry with the pleasurable habit of hanging on to other people's pockets, although even then he is always dunny. The farther he is from England the more he flourishes, and his *modus operandi* is immensely facilitated if he happens to be found up country somewhere, and the postal arrangements break down.

Then he tells the first man he meets, whom he has the slightest excuse for claiming acquaintance with, and has not already fleeced, that it is a most confounded nuisance the mails being delayed, as he is expecting a remittance from his “ people in England,” and until it arrives he positively has not a sou to go

on with. He generally manages to enlist the sympathy of someone, and usually succeeds in raising a good deal more than the solitary sou he intimated would satisfy him at the opening of the negotiations.

All these parasites of the sponge order possess very frail and delicate constitutions, necessitating a constant change of air and scene, and they travel about the country almost as much as Jew smausers.

Speaking of Jew smausers reminds me how they swarmed South Africa in those dull times.

Since there has been such a demand in the country the last few years for financiers and company promoters, the smausers have disappeared wonderfully, and one quite misses the Polo-German-Mosaic-Arab who used to hail you with "to you vant ta puy a vaatch, a real good vaatch, a vaatch zat vill go?" If you told him you didn't happen to want one just then, and politely requested him to leave, he waxed familiar, and wanted to come inside and argue the matter out in a friendly way. In the end, you had to gently lift him outside, and deposit him on the doorstep, and say "voortsak," or, "shish, go away, my good man."

But this persistently energetic "shentleman's" temper was never ruffled at such treatment, nor did he stop arguing, nor leave the premises, until he had made half-a-dozen more attempts at the front door, gone round smiling to the back entrance with a "peautiful tiamond prooch," and encountered there the "leetle tog" and a bucketful of soap-suds.

He was always on the make, and ready to turn his hand to anything (except, of course, hard work) to earn an honest penny—when he couldn't do it any other way, or make it more.

Rural districts and farmers he was very fond of, especially Dutch farmers who had not been to school. He seemed to think he had a mission to fulfil among them. Well, so he had, for the matter of that; but what I mean is that he thought they required educating up to his own standard, and he undertook to do it to the best of his ability.

History, they say, repeats itself, and in the matter of railways it certainly does, for the old school of Dutchmen in South Africa exhibit all the prejudice to the iron horse that George Stephenson had to contend against in this country at the beginning of the present century.

The illiterate up-country Boers are extremely suspicious of most movements of a progressive nature, but railways are their pet aversion, as being far more dangerous and prone to annihilate them than even threshing machines and traction engines, both of which they regard as modern abominations contrived for the specific purpose of wiping all honest husbandmen out of existence. They say the good folks mentioned in the Bible, and their own forefathers, grandfathers, and grandmothers, did very well without these things, and why cannot they now; and as for railways, why, what do you want better than a nice, handy ox-waggon?

The sons of Abraham to whom I have referred fully appreciated this antipathy of the Boers to railways, and supported them in their views, as trains do not suit smausers either, nor conduce much to the comfort and convenience of any other men who stick their clients with "innardless vaatches," Parisian diamonds, and brazen trinkets, "varranted eighteen carat, s'help me."

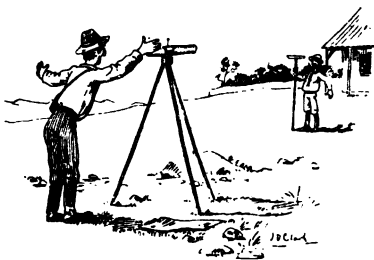
Two of these gentry once played off rather a smart trick on a rich old sheep-farming Dutchman, away on the borders, who mortally dreaded the idea of a railway coming within miles of him, and naturally thought he was pretty well out of their reach where he was.

The way the Israelites went about it was very simple, almost as simple as the old boy they spoofed.

They rigged up a tripod, mounted a tin telescope on it theodolite fashion, inscribed a lot of mystic red and black ink scratchings on a big sheet of grocers' white wrapping paper, and begged, borrowed, or booted a long tape measure.

Approaching the Dutchman's homestead, they planted themselves about a hundred yards away, and opened out this paraphernalia.

One of them went a few paces nearer in the direction of the house, drove a stick





into the ground, and held it perpendicularly while the other fellow squinted through the spy-glass at it, and gave him instructions as to the exact position it was to be placed in by doing an alarming amount of semaphore signalling with his arms.

A very little of this sort of thing sufficed to draw cover, and soon enough the old Dutchman made an appearance on the stoep outside the house, and commenced to take a big interest in the proceedings.

The Jew boys then piled on the agony, unrolled the grocers' paper, put their heads together, and finally struck important attitudes, with their arms akimbo, and legs apart, whilst they held a consultation, during which they pointed in a frightfully suggestive manner towards the Dutchman and his house.

This was too much for "oompie."

"Hey! donner! vat do you kerls vant?"

"Only a road voor ze railway," shouted back the Jew boys.

"Duivel! ach kerls wait a minute, I vill com and talk vith you;" saying which the old boy started off towards them at a pace that clearly indicated that he expected to see a full-grown railway in working order produced on the spot, unless he hurried up and came to terms.

When he got up to them, he gasped out a few inquiries as to who they were, and what they wanted; and being told in reply that they were Government

engineers, fully authorised to select the best route for a new railway from Timbuctoo to Jerusalem, he moaned out a further inquiry as to why they selected a road through his farm, asked whether they could not take another route, and wound up with an offer of fifty pounds if they would try to find one not less than a hundred miles away.

His persecutors shrugged their shoulders, and said it was "impossible," politely intimating further that fifty pounds would not pay for cakes and shoeleather while they were hunting up another route—their idea of economy for that job would be more like five hundred.

When the Dutchman hung back at the price, they began manipulating with the telescope and tape measure again, and consulted in an unkind off-hand sort of way about the necessity of advising the Government to pull down a wing of the old man's house, and constructing the rail track through his back yard.

This almost gave "oompie" a fit of apoplexy, and by keeping up a lot of handy little talk to similar effect, they at last succeeded in screwing ninety pounds and a big dinner out of the old fellow, after which they undertook to go and fossick up another route for the Timbuctoo-Jerusalem line.

## CHAPTER VI.

A CRUISE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN—OFF TO MADAGASCAR—  
SOMETHING IN A NAME—CONCERNING THE PHENIX PARK  
MURDERS—I BECOME ACQUAINTED WITH THE INVINCIBLE  
BROTHERHOOD—MAL DE MER—REGARDING CERTAIN INTER-  
ESTING LITTLE CHARMERS—I SEE BERT AGAIN—HE NEARLY  
COMES TO GRIEF—MADAGASCAR AND THE FRENCH—A DEAD  
MARINE, OR THE NEXT THING TO IT—A RUN ASHORE—WHAT  
I SAW, AND MY OPINION THEREOF.

I MUST have been nigh upon two years at the  
Cape, when I went unexpectedly to Mauritius,  
on behalf of a syndicate formed for the object of  
opening up a new market for Cape produce, and for  
the immediate purpose of relieving with supplies the  
reported distress among the Mauritians caused by the  
French blockade of that part of the Madagascar coast  
whence Mauritius obtained its live stock. Information  
had reached the Cape that the inhabitants of the little  
island in the Indian Ocean were in a state of semi-  
starvation, whereupon a syndicate of moneyed men  
was hastily formed, which deputed me to take out  
a cargo of sheep and cattle, in charge of herdsmen,  
to relieve them.

As the "Darlton Hall," a screw steamer of some  
two thousand tons, was leaving on the morrow with

mails and Government despatches for the British authorities at Tamatave and Port Louis, arrangements were hurriedly made with her owners to convey the living freight. Thus it was that within a few hours of the business being first mooted I found myself at sea once more, entrusted with an undertaking that was calculated to puzzle a Philadelphia lawyer.

The ambition of my life was within my reach. I was really in charge of a sort of Relief Expedition, only my inexperience and modesty prevented me from turning the opportunity to account—in the interest of humanity.

Why, oh! why, did I not induce the opulent ones whom I represented to call themselves a committee instead of a syndicate? Committee is such a nice, respectable, philanthropic name to go by when you are going to relieve anyone, never mind whether it is of gout or money. It never twangs of vain glory or worldly gain, nor even suggests that your business is relieving other people of something they would sooner keep.

It sounds good, nay, almost holy, compared to syndicate.

To call a friendly little "oof" club a syndicate, I think, sounds bad—almost as bad as calling yourself a financier. There is such a frightfully strong savour of Mammonish marauding, concession squeezing, and treaty trucking about it. No, the next lot of finan—I mean philanthropists for whom I conduct a Relief

Expedition will have to call themselves a committee, or I shall strike.

And I shall see that —

Oh! hang it; what is the use of my fretting about it? Although it does make me feel a bit ruffled, and takes the starch out of me sometimes, when I think of the chances I've missed. But, W. P. and I. O. U. (otherwise independent of upsets), I mean to make up for lost time yet, and so does Bert, only his idea of doing it is to start a salvation army, and he is always raving because he let somebody else pick up the notion before he did.

The "Darlton Hall," which was handsomely fitted up for passenger accommodation, carried only my party and self as passengers—the service upon which she was engaged, and the suddenness of her departure, being in themselves sufficient reasons to account for this, irrespective of the fact that she was bound for ports and places whither few travellers were likely to be attracted.

Knowing that we were to call at Durban for latest Admiralty cablegraphic orders from London for Admiral Hewitt in Mauritius, I wired Bert from Cape Town, asking him to come off in the tug, if possible, and see me in the Natal roadstead, as I was aware that we should scarcely be detained there any time—certainly not long enough to allow me to land.

On the day we left Table Bay, Carey, the Irish informer against the notorious Phoenix Park

murderers, was shot dead by O'Donnell, the Invincible, on board the coasting steamer "Melrose," which had preceded us round the coast.

A somewhat curious incident occurred to me in connection with this now historical murder of Carey.

The day that he arrived in Cape Town from England, and three days before his murder, I happened to be seated alone on the verandah of one of the clubs in Cape Town, when a respectably-dressed young fellow stumbled up the few steps from the street below, and threw himself down on the seat beside me. After remaining in a quiescent state for a few minutes, he turned and asked me, in a maudlin sort of way, but in language more forcible than elegant, whether I could keep my mouth shut if he told me something on the quiet that was worth knowing. Seeing the fellow was pretty far gone in drink, I suggested that he had better keep his secrets to himself until he met someone he knew, and the sun was not quite so hot. Without paying much heed to what I said, however, he stage-whispered into my ear that he had just come out on board the "Kinfauns Castle," in company with Carey, the Irish informer, whom the police had tried to smuggle out of England undiscovered by the Invincibles. Not manifesting, upon receipt of this news, the keen interest my informant evidently expected of me, he pulled out of his breast pocket a large revolver, and, whilst toying with it, commenced

mumbling in an undertone what I took to be a string of incoherent nonsense, partly addressed to himself, and partly to me, about the merits of Fenianism, and secret societies in general, and the deserts of such a traitor as Carey in particular. The fact of a man in his state having a revolver at all, and dangling it under my nose in the fashion he was doing, inspired me with more interest in the individual than his strange utterances had, my first impulse being to obtain possession of the weapon, and see if the chambers were loaded, before, possibly, he blew his own head off, or somebody else's—particularly my own.

He readily yielded it up to me when, under the pretence of admiring the weapon, I asked him to let me examine it.

I found it was a beautifully-finished Colt's army regulation revolver, with its six chambers every one of them loaded. After a considerable amount of wheedling, he consented to allow me to extract the cartridges, and thrust them into his pockets.

Handing him back the now harmless weapon, I advised him that he would do well to return to the docks, and leave Carey and Fenianism alone, lest he lost his passage round the coast. He said something about there being no fear of this, as he had a comrade to look after him, adding, "Come Sunday it will be all over, and the boys will have a good time of it in Paris." As this was all incomprehensible rubbish to

me, I rose and left the fellow ; but later in the day, having business to transact at the docks, I saw him being led along to where his vessel lay by a man who, I afterwards learned, must have been Carey's murderer, O'Donnell, from the description I was able to give of him.

Considered in the light of after events, there can be little doubt that this young Irishman, who was indiscrete enough, in a befuddled state, to half disclose his secrets to a stranger, was a member of the Invincible Brotherhood, accompanying O'Donnell for the purpose of ensuring Carey's being done to death—possibly under oath to do the business himself, and fatally punish O'Donnell, had the latter failed in his attempt, or shown the white feather. One thing is certain—the day for giving Carey his quietus had been fixed before he and O'Donnell left England, and my informant was aware of it, for his allusions to Sunday and Paris, which at the time I put down to some drunken hallucination of his, clearly referred to the anticipation of Carey's death by the leading Invincibles, who had sought refuge in the "gay city," and who, it transpired during O'Donnell's trial at the Old Bailey, had openly expressed their satisfaction at the deed, actually before the time on the very day (Sunday) that Carey was shot.

From Table Bay to Durban I had anything but a pleasant time of it aboard the "Darlton Hall."

Having next to nothing but the sheep and cattle



of the Relief Syndicate on board, and experiencing terribly dirty weather the very first night out, the steamer rolled like a barrel, tossing and tumbling the animals about in a shocking manner. All the beasts, as far as the haste of shipment permitted, had been specially selected for weight and condition, many of them scaling upwards of three-quarters of a ton. With the fearful rolling and pitching of the vessel, the animals swayed helplessly to and fro, snapping like cotton the head ropes passed round their enormous horns for the purpose of tying them up, stall fashion, round the sides of the lower holds. The decks soon became dreadfully slippery, and without sand or battens to give the animals a firm foothold they floundered about from side to side, crashing into and goring each other, breaking their legs, bruising, and otherwise injuring themselves to such an extent as to necessitate, in some cases, immediate slaughter.

Throughout the night we strived to disentangle the struggling mass. At considerable risk of being injured by their horns, or crushed by the huge floundering brutes in the cramped space and darkness of a ship's hold, while the ill-ballasted vessel was tumbling about in a rough sea, we managed to weed out and despatch the more badly maimed animals, and, with the aid of the ship's steam winches, and strong rope tackle, their carcasses were hauled out. Those of the animals refusing, either from fright or obstinacy, to rise, were also lifted, by means of the

steam winches, into canvas slings, and kept suspended until the bad weather abated.

For a day and two nights we were labouring almost incessantly down in those awful holds. The herdsmen, with the exception of one, a strapping Wiltshire lad, were sea sick to a man, as well they might be ; but more dead than alive they stuck manfully to their task, never giving in until the pandemonium below had been reduced to something like a state of safety and sweetness.

I felt horribly queer myself whilst the bad weather lasted, and began to think that I had contracted foot-and-mouth disease, spavins, staggers, or some other dreadful complaint from the cattle ; and the more I brooded over it, and studied my symptoms, the worse I felt. At last I was sure I had foot-and-mouth disease in a fatal form, and I was also certain that I had a touch of patent medicines, as I suffered frightfully from loss of appetite, depression of spirits, sleeplessness, sinking sensation in the pit of the stomach, listlessness, etc., etc.—especially from loss of appetite and the sinking sensation. About the spavins I was in some doubt, but I had staggers for a moral.

As I pondered in anguish over my approaching dissolution, beads of cold perspiration broke out upon my brow, and I wished I had been better when I was a boy, and even feared I had left room for improvement in more recent years. I thought it was rather hard lines that I was likely to be buried at sea,

instead of in the pretty little quiet churchyard away in old England, which I had pictured to myself should be my last resting-place. I felt more soothed, though, when I thought of how pathetic it would be to find a watery grave far away from home and friends, to have a nice mural tablet with an urn on top put up in the dear old ivy-covered parish church to record all my good qualities and many virtues for the benefit and emulation of generations to come; to have the bell tolled and perhaps something nice said about me in the next Sunday's sermon. Under such circumstances I was inclined to think that death, in the noble service of a Relief Syndicate, had its advantages after all.

These were my reflections when I felt more than usually gay and light-hearted, comparatively speaking. What my thoughts and reflections were at other times during that bad weather, and when I had an extra sharp twist of sinkings and staggers, it is scarcely safe to relate—it might cause acute melancholia in weak-minded persons, and possibly lead to suicide, so I had better leave it alone.

And yet ninety-nine people out of a hundred smile at the very mention of sea-sickness—that is if they are not in the throes of it themselves; somehow they don't smile at all then, but look fireworks at anyone else who does. It is something like toothache—downright wicked agony very often, still it awakens little or no sympathy. The first man you meet who

is not sea-sick himself greets you with an imbecile grin, and says, "Oh, it's nothing, old fellow, you'll soon get over it"; and if he is a particular friend sharing the cabin with you, he laughs in your face, smokes a strong pipe, and loves to talk about tallow candles and string, train oil, fat pork, and other horrors. This is no side reflection on Bert, because he is always too ill himself to trouble about me, and of course I always leave him alone.

Although I suppose there are more reputed antidotes for mal-de-mer than for any other known ailment, bar none, I inflict another on mankind, because I have found it possess the extraordinary and unusual merit of doing some good. It was given me as an original idea by an old Brazilian naval officer. Here is the recipe:—Put a teaspoonful of good strong black or white pepper into a tumbler full of cold water; stir well, and then allow the pepper to settle. If what may be called this "pepper water" is sipped at, say, intervals of half-an-hour, it will be found grateful and comforting to a degree, and in nine cases out of ten it will give considerable relief.

We dropped anchor off Port Natal on the Sunday afternoon. The weather had cleared, and the sun shone out brilliantly o'er land and sea, as the little tug "Zulu" from shore crossed the sand-bar at the mouth of the harbour, and plunged bravely across the open roadstead towards us.

I had not seen Bert since he left me in Cape Town

two years before, and as the tiny craft approached nearer and nearer, and it became possible to distinguish objects aboard her, I scanned her deck eagerly for some signs of him.

As I watched, I felt almost as tenderly agitated as one of those interesting maidens who contribute so largely to the passenger lists of outward-bound steamers, and are flying to the arms of their dear Reginalds to get tied up.

You can easily spot these charmers, even on the day of sailing, if you observe the groups on the quarter-deck at leave-taking time. Besides the "dear young thing's" own relatives, and a representative or two of Reggie's family, who stand around giving her good advice all at the same time, and shedding copious tears of mingled joy and sorrow, she is always surrounded by a bevy of fair sympathetic damsels, whose only aim in life for the time being appears to consist in worrying the "dear thing" who is departing into repeated and lavish promises to write them a full account of her voyage out, and a detailed account of her wedding, with little particulars about what other people's opinion was, what Reggie said, and how she felt when she appeared in public with all the precious nuptial fal-dals on, which she is taking with her, and which for convenience of transport (lady's method) are contained in thirteen parcels and a



band-box. The aforesaid fair damsels having already attended a private dress rehearsal, at which the "dear thing" paraded in full glorious warpaint, all they pine for now is to know what other people think and say about the turn out.

The "dear thing's" own energies are principally directed towards making frequent and quite unnecessary inquiry from everyone about certain mysterious packages, which in her confusion (bless her little heart) she variously describes as large, flat, oblong, broad, square, narrow cases, marked Mr. Reginald—no, Miss—well there, she cannot say positively how they are addressed, but they contain sundry articles of household utility, and must go with her in the same steamer or she will die. On the voyage out the "dear thing" spends most of her time in some quiet corner studying Mrs. Beeton's Cookery Book (with coloured plates), relieving the strain on her mind which this involves by occasionally dipping into "Advice to the Young House-wife," "How to make a Happy Home," and other engrossing literature after the same style. Young men of single persuasion who attempt to frivel with her are immediately shrivelled up with a look of virtuous indignation, which clearly gives the intruding sinner to understand that she is "Reggie's only own little ducky darling," and not to be trifled with—trespassers will be prosecuted. At times she sighs with a velocity that would increase the vessel's speed

a good five knots an hour if the "dear thing" would only station herself well aft, and let them rip up against the mainsail. Arrived at her destination, and while the steam tender from shore is coming off with her very own Reggie on board, the sweet young thing glides unobserved behind a big boat on the hurricane deck, and, leaning over the ship's rail, awaits with fluttering heart the advent of her beloved one.

Well, I experienced quite a fluttering sensation myself as I watched for some signs of Bert.

Presently I caught sight of a familiar object on the bridge of the tug. It had the appearance at first of being a white umbrella tent covering a pair of legs; but I was not to be deluded in that way—it was unmistakably Bert's precious helmet, or at any rate a replica thereof, and in response to a wave of recognition from me it was raised aloft, and wobbled about in as vivacious a manner as its ponderous proportions would allow.

The "Zulu" was soon alongside us, and when Bert himself, attired in a spotless suit of whites and girdled round the waist with a blood-red silken cummerbund, sprang into my presence and commenced operating on my arm as though it were a pump handle, I saw that he was not much the worse for two years' wear in genial Natal.

Time was short in which to get through all our accumulated pent up "chip" of nearly two years, for our correspondence, with the exception of the one

letter from Bert upon his arrival in Natal, had been a series of disgraceful libels on the word—our epistles for the most part having consisted of about a dozen lines each, half of which were generally devoted to explaining why we had not been able to drop a line before, and the other half to concluding in haste as the mail was closing, etc.

In the scramble for knowledge that ensued, I learned from Bert that he was still in the office of the Archbishop's friend, and very well satisfied—for a wonder!—to continue so whilst he looked round a little. He also surprised me by stating that the Archbishop had turned out a "brick," and would have come off with him to see his reprobate friend—(myself!)—had it been any other day of the week but Sunday. As to his future movements, Bert said he had not quite decided upon them; of course, he intended ultimately to go up country, but could not say positively at present in what capacity he should go—certainly not as a mounted policeman, as I suggested.

We had gone down to the saloon to hold our tête-à-tête, and were just getting into good form, when a steward came hurriedly to tell us that the tug was casting off for shore again. It was horribly unfortunate, because we were on the point of splitting a bottle of soda-water with a cinder in it, and there was not time even to wait for that unless Bert ran the risk of being taken to Madagascar with us.



As it was, he had to slide down a greasy rope over the ship's side to reach the tug, his descent being most painful and undignified, and his vestry meeting comments quite unfitted for a Sunday afternoon.

The tug was tucked snugly under him as he commenced to slip down the rope, but at that critical moment a big swell—(a nautical one)—parted the two vessels, and left Bert dangling about ten feet above the water, with his beautiful white “ducks” puckered up above his knees, and embellished with patches of dirt and tar. For the instant it looked as though he were going to offer himself as a tasty morsel for the sharks frequenting Natal waters, and I made anxious inquiries regarding his last wishes—how he'd like it broken to his friends, and what was to be done with his helmet. But before any catastrophe could happen the tug closed in under him again, and he was able to cheat the sharks by dropping down on her deck in safety.



As the “Zulu” cast away from us and gradually receded, Bert gave me to understand in stentorian tones that he hoped next time I came to Natal I would try to arrange matters a little differently, as he objected to be rushed in such a fashion, and compelled to play climbing monkey in white clothes over a ship's side that wanted dusting badly.

“Never mind, old boy; I'm sure you're taking a

good impression away with you all the same. Tar-tar; *au revoir !*" I shouted, as once more we parted, after a meeting that had been all too short and unsatisfactory.

Leaving Natal on the Sunday evening, we headed our way across the Mozambique Channel, and rounded Cape St. Mary, the most southernly point of Madagascar, on the following Wednesday.

On account of the intermittent warfare waging between the French and Malagasys, it was feared that neutral British subjects in the country, more particularly missionaries, might suffer ill-treatment at the hands of the natives. For this reason it was deemed expedient that the "Darlton Hall" should steam as close in shore as possible, and maintain a sharp look out for any refugees who might have found their way to the east coast between Cape St. Mary and Tamatave. This was effectually done, but without result; and beyond surprising a small schooner smuggling in arms to the Sakalavas, in a cove known as Fort Dauphin, scaring away by a blast of our steam whistle a few blacks who had the temerity to approach us in their war canoes, and exchanging greetings with the Roman Catholic mission station at Majunga, where the priests bravely held their own during the war at considerable risk to their lives, nothing of much moment occurred until we arrived off Tamatave on the following Saturday night.

We hove-to outside the dangerous, low-lying coral

reefs, forming the principal harbour of Madagascar, until daylight, the powerful electric search-lights of the French fleet being kept suspiciously on us throughout the night.

At dawn, we steamed in at the southern entrance, and anchored abreast to seaward of the five French warships of Admiral Pierre's squadron, engaged in the magnificent task of blockading the straggling collection of bungalows and tropical shanties to be seen skirting the shore.

It is not in my province, neither is it possible in these pages, to attempt anything like even an adequate resumé of incidents which at the time created such profound excitement, and so nearly proved a *casus belli* between this country and France.

I refer to the Shaw and "Dryad" incidents.

There is a possibility that the indomitable pluck and resource displayed by the two adventurous Englishmen, Willoughby and Shervington, in leading the Malagasy against their invaders, may have rankled in the breast of the ultra-patriotic French Admiral, and incited him to the unfortunate overt acts, and exhibition of Anglophobia, which culminated in the imprisonment of Missionary Shaw on board the French flagship "Floré," Admiral Pierre improving the occasion by having his inoffensive captive fed out of a bucket, amongst other petty indignities, at a cost to his country of £2,000 for the joke—which sum, at the instigation of the English Government, was paid

to Missionary Shaw as a sort of solatium for the injury his feelings sustained. I should like to have the chance of feeding out of a clean bucket a few times myself at the same price.

Admiral Pierre, however, met his match in Lieutenant Johnston. How that officer, in command of the little English gunboat "Dryad," successfully defied, single-handed, the overbearing Frenchman and his squadron is well known.

Hardly was our anchor dropped, when we were boarded by a couple of diminutive French naval officers. These emissaries of the redoubtable Pierre promptly planted two armed sentries on our quarter-deck, notwithstanding the fact that by so doing they were committing as flagrant a breach of international law and trespass as though the vessel's planks had been Fleet Street, or the Strand.

For permitting this insult our captain was greatly to blame, and he displayed a lamentable lack of discretion in not at least seriously protesting against such an invasion of his vessel. The sentries were ostensibly placed in charge of the gangways, in order to restrict our communication with the shore; but for all the good they were they might as well have remained aboard their own vessels.

I have seen many curious specimens of soldiery, but the French "Joey's," in Madagascar waters, beat even the Mozambique fire-eaters, who represent Portuguese majesty on the East African coast, which

is saying a good deal. In breed they were emaciated Creoles, in intellectual capacity they fell rather below an average Hottentot, and in costume they were the funniest tie-ups of grimy canvas and odd ends I have ever seen outside a marine-store dealer's shop. A guard-boat came from one or other of the men-of-war at regular intervals, during that momentous day, to relieve these martial terrors by others; and, if variety is charming, we ought to have been, oh, so happy! and ever so grateful to the little Frenchmen who bossed the show!

There was no monotony even in the string they were done up with, only some of it looked rather risky to manufacture suspenders out of—it was so painfully thin. And the shades of colour were not always in harmony; for instance, an off-side main stay of light sailmaker's twine (they were perilously hitched up on one side only, as a rule) did not go well with brown yarn boot laces; and gunny-bag chin straps were out of keeping with green patches of carpet-thread cobbles on short extremities. Some of them sported shoes, others boots; none of them swaggered socks, and but few of them shirts.

Their head-gear also varied—some wearing dubious-looking caps, others off-coloured straw hats. Striking a fair average, I should describe them as cadaverous-looking darkies, in dirty canvas suits, and straw hats, struggling under the weight of a fully-loaded Winchester repeating rifle, with a belt round the waist

supporting a huge reserve pouch full of ammunition for same, and a prodigious weapon called a sword bayonet.

With a good square meal, we decoyed one of these doughty warriors into a secluded corner, and eventually succeeded in divesting him of everything he came on board with—even to his don't-mention-'ems. Under the soothing influence of a beefsteak, and a big bottle of Bass, this was easily accomplished, on the confidence trick principle, with a judicious amount of interested flattery thrown in. Standing round in an admiring group, while our gallant friend ravenously put the provender out of sight, we, that is two or three of the ship's officers and myself, exhibited in the first place a pleasing interest in the Winchester rifle, which the confiding marine, now squatting on a camp stool, with a plate on his knees, had deposited on the deck alongside him. Passing it from one to the other whilst discussing the merits of the weapon, and keeping up a brisk fire of soapy interrogatories with its owner in the best Creole French we could rise to, the gun was unsuspectingly conveyed to the rear, and carried away to an adjacent bath-room to be washed. Without difficulty, and in similar manner, we obtained possession of everything but the fighting man's tunic and don't-mention-'ems. With the spirit of unrest within us, we hankered even after these, until we got them.

The prospect of another bottle of Bass, and a few

more steaks, did it, when we told him how we pined to try on his gorgeous vestments, and be a French marine for just one short sweet minute in our lives. We said he could get into the empty cow-box near by, pull down the weather blind, disrobe, and hand out the result in exchange for a second edition of provender, which he could stow away while we made ourselves happy and played soldiers awhile.

He closed on our offer, and in due course the garments were handed over to us. Just as they were being passed round for inspection—on the end of mop-sticks, however; no one appeared keen to get into them—the wretched guard-boat, with an officer in charge, was reported coming alongside to relieve sentries. This was nothing less than a disaster, for it was a moral impossibility to put the branch of the French Navy in the cow-box in marching order again before the officer had time to discover that something was wrong. How to save our pigeon from suffering for our little joke we were, for the instant, at a loss to know.

Clothed in native modesty, our victim was complacently squatting on the straw bedding, taking in stores, when we thrust all the gear he had been denuded of in on top of



him, and told him to tie himself into it sharp, as his officer was aboard. But before he could do it, the little French lieutenant was on the war path, and it was only by the tact of our doctor that bloodshed and desolation were avoided. Telling one of us to hurry away and intercept the officer, he entered the cow-box, thrust the debris of the marine's last feast out of sight under the straw, and told that affrighted individual to play sick man, or he would smother him. He played sick man—(very well too, on about five pounds of beef and etceteras, and a quart of bottled beer)—the long and short of it being that two of his comrades were requisitioned to assist him into the guard-boat, under the impression that he was suffering from the immediate after effects of a severe fit of some sort, the precise nature of which our doctor seemed at no loss to thoroughly explain to the lieutenant. As the latter took his departure, he effusively thanked us all round for the very kind treatment his man had received at our hands, under such painful circumstances, adding something about the *entente cordiale* existing between France and England. But we begged him not to mention such a trifle, it was not worth talking about—we should be happy, if necessary, to do the same for him at any time, when he was round our way again on a similar errand.

We found about forty British refugee subjects waiting at Tamatave for an opportunity to leave the



country. These people were mostly Hindoo coolies, who had been engaged on the extensive sugar plantations on the south-east coast, and a few Mauritius small traders; but amongst the number was also a batch of European missionaries, hunters, travellers, and others. Some of these latter (amongst them a nephew of the noble Livingstone) had found residence in Madagascar so risky and unpleasant after France commenced to play bogie-man round the coasts, with her big guns, and awe-inspiring electric lights (in many parts of the island thereby scaring away the natives at night a distance of twelve to sixteen miles inland), that they wisely determined to evacuate the country, until a more settled state of things prevailed. One party of missionaries, indeed, were so pressed by the open hostility of the natives towards them, on the Sakalava coast, that they were compelled to creep along the seaboard, to Tamatave, in canoes.

To my regret, circumstances, of course, prevented the possibility of my seeing much of a country which is, undoubtedly, a most interesting one, and full of magnificent promise. I did, however (never mind in what manner), manage to evade the "bristling" bayonets of the French marines on the decks of the "Darlton Hall," and without French leave, yet with French leave, took a run ashore at Tamatave.

It seems unsatisfactory, to my mind, to hang about outside a country, as it were, and not even drop in and have a look at it. But in this instance, beyond

deriving a certain satisfaction at having placed myself in jeopardy of incurring the gallant Pierre's wrath, and probably condign punishment at the hands of his minions—*déjeuner de la bucket à la Shaw*, or something of that sort—I cannot honestly say that I reaped much benefit for my trouble.

I came to the conclusion that Tamatave was much the same as other tropical places. Plenty of palm trees, mountains of cactus hedges, a goodly sprinkling of Europeans' airy bungalows with their indispensable verandahs, and that indescribable, but ever prevalent "*bouquet de nigger*," which hums around with persistent fragrantcy wherever the untamed savage is very much "a thing of beauty and a joy for ever." The fort, such as it was, had been all but annihilated during the recent French bombardment; perhaps the rest was being kept to jump on when the Frenchmen got on the war trail again, and wanted to hurt something. At the best it could not have withstood a broadside of pea-shooters. The foreshore was strewn with debris, principally remnants of small barrels, cases, provision tins, and such-like. How they came there, or what had become of the contents of the cases, etc., I am unable to say, but it looked as though the exigencies of war had necessitated pillage; anyhow, it gave to the place an unspeakable air of forlorn wretchedness, and suggested the idea of what Margate sands would be like on the following morning if the London 'Arrys and 'Arriets had their fling on a

Bank Holiday at the expense of the storekeepers, and no one to sweep up after them.

What struck me more forcibly than anything else, after the first blow from the native scent-bottle, were the niggers. A fair number of these, who appeared to be good chums with the Frenchmen, were about the cantonment. I thought it best to keep a safe distance off them in case I lost my way, as I had no lantern and only a couple of matches left—they were so dark. Their heads were egg-shaped, covered with the usual jet black crop of short crisp wool, while their faces bore an expression of cunning treachery, such as I have never seen equalled in any other type of negro. This may be an unfair judgment on a noble race of beings—perhaps it is; I have never lived among them, and therefore do not wish to claim any profound insight into their true dispositions and national characteristics; but speaking with some knowledge of negro humanity, I should be sorry to trust further than I could see them, such sinister-looking creatures as I saw in Tamatave.

## CHAPTER VII.

MAURITIUS—SOMETHING MORE IN A NAME—PAY YOUR MONEY AND TAKE YOUR CHOICE (IN CHANGE)—I CANNOT FIND A FAMINE, BUT DO WITHOUT IT, AND RELIEVE MYSELF OF THE CARGO—THE REPORT I OUGHT TO HAVE SENT TO THE SYNDICATE—PIGMY PONIES—PORT LOUIS RACES—PAMPÈ LE MOUSSE GARDENS—THE WAY THEY MADE LOVE IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS.

ALL those who desired to take passage with us having come on board, the Frenchmen gave us our *congé*, the anchor was weighed, and as the last rays of the setting sun lighted up with golden radiance the distant hill-tops, glinting across the neighbouring palm trees skirting the shore, and throwing into bold relief the sombre hulls and trim spars of the French warships riding motionless at their moorings, we glided gently between the foam-lashed coral reefs, and passed out to sea.

Mauritius—which lies a few hundred miles almost due eastward of Tamatave—was sighted on the second day.

The island, up to that time, had been principally associated in my mind with two things. To me it was the home of Paul and Virginia, those love-birds of the old school, immortalised by the French novelist. Sugar—twopenny brown—was the other item.

I had pictured to myself (so far as I had troubled to picture anything at all) an uninteresting, half-populated island, about twice the size of the Isle of Wight, given over to the exclusive cultivation of the sugar-cane, and periodically ravaged by fever. Theodore Hook, who once spent a brief but bitter period on the island, I regarded in some measure as having atoned, by reason of his virtual banishment to such a place, for any crime he ever committed.

Concerning the size of the island, my idea was fairly correct. About as correct as I could expect, having been educated on the cramming system, and left with a vague doubt as to whether I was a pedantic Parsee or Julius Cæsar.

In other respects my conclusions in regard to Mauritius were rather adrift.

The harbour of Port Louis is a very fine one, not unlike that at Sydney, affording a safe and excellent anchorage for a large amount of shipping, except during the terrific hurricanes which occasionally sweep over the island. Moreover, the port possessed, until recently, the only dry dock accommodation along the whole of the great ocean route between England and the East, via the Cape.

Admiral Hewitt's East Indian Squadron, ordered down from Trincomalee on account of the turn of events in Madagascar, was waiting in the harbour for the instructions contained in despatches brought by us in the "Darlton Hall." Stationed equi-distant from

each other, the vessels of the squadron, with their white painted hulls glistening in the morning sunlight, gave an animated picturesqueness to the scene as we steamed slowly into the harbour ; while the well-found cutters, launches, and other small craft belonging to the fleet, as they briskly passed to and fro between the landing-stages and their respective ships, each with their hearty-looking, well-disciplined complement of British blue-jackets, were a remarkable contrast to the awkwardly-handled boats, and unkempt, slovenly punies doing similar duty under the French admiral at Tamatave.

I have tried to remember the names of the vessels comprising Admiral Hewitt's squadron, but I am not equal to it.

If asked what ship they belonged to, the sailors grinned, and referred you to the obscure label round their head-gear.

My Lords at Whitehall have a fetching little method all their own in christening the British Navy. As a consequence, poor Jack either finds himself utterly unable to render the name of his ship decently, and is driven to the necessity of coining a slang one for himself ; or else, again, he feels ashamed to try, because the title is so miserably un-English and absurd.

I have neither present opportunity nor inclination to wade through the mythological and entomological lore of a Navy List, in order to aid my memory, but I will be bound there was a "Bluebottle," a

"Polyhymnia" (or, as Jack would say, some other Polly), a "Blackbeetle," "Bumblebee," or an "Æsculapius" among Her Britannic Majesty's Fleet in Port Louis Harbour.

The busy sugar season was just commencing when we arrived, and I saw at once that I was not likely to be more lonesome than I could bear during my stay.

There were still a few folk left to make the place lively—about eighty thousand in the town of Port Louis, and some three hundred thousand inhabitants in the island altogether, I was told.

The streets were swarming with a motley throng of thin-visaged Creoles, attenuated Indian coolies, bartering Arabs, and smileless Chinamen; to say nothing of bra' Scotties, blustering Englishmen, pert Irishmen, gesticulating Frenchmen, stolid Germans, and cute Yankees.

To a non-resident, the confusion of languages was distracting, and the coinage was worse.

Possessing a remnant knowledge of Hindustanee, I managed, with a smattering of schoolboy French, to keep afloat all right so far as making myself understood was concerned, but when it came to the coinage I thought I should have gone under. When I turned out my pockets, after the first day ashore, I found I had a balance of petty cash left, consisting of three shillings and ninepence-halfpenny English, five francs French, two dollars ten cents Mauritius, one dollar United States, three rupees one anna Indian, and

two pounds avoirdupois of Chinese cash on a string. The latter was weighed over to me in the Chinese quarter by a sow-eyed Celestial, who sold me a pair of grass bath slippers for about a couple of shillings, after asking me a modest "two dollee" for the articles to commence with.

Mauritius, far from being in the semi state of starvation reported at the Cape, was in a perfectly normal condition as regarded its food supply. The importation of cattle from Madagascar had suffered no check whatever by the operations of the French. Indeed, we entered Port Louis Harbour almost abreast of a steamer bringing no less than three hundred head of oxen from Nossi-Bè, on the north-east coast of Madagascar.

This placed me in a most serious dilemma in regard to the disposal of the valuable shipment of live stock which I had brought such a distance. It was absolutely impossible to save my friends at the Cape from sustaining a very heavy loss in return for their enterp——, I mean philanthropy.

The queer little bandy-horned, hump-backed cattle from Nossi-Bè were being landed at Mauritius, or rather dropped overboard and left to swim ashore, at a cost per head very slightly exceeding the value of each sheep I had on board the "Darlton Hall." This is, of course, calculating in addition to first cost, the large outlay the Cape people had incurred for shipping, tending, freightage, fodder, steamer's fittings, etc.



To aggravate matters, a bold attempt was made by a certain ungracious section in the island to "corner" me, under the too evident impression that I was pressed for time.

Determined to make the best of a bad job (it is ever easy to do well with a good one), I faced the music, and immediately made arrangements which clearly indicated that I had come prepared to stay, if need be.

Purchasing a quantity of the weedy, but good enough, rice hay of the island, to help keep the animals in condition, I had them landed and turned out into pasturage. I then engaged a competent number of men to assist those whom I had brought with me, secured stalls in Port Louis market, and forthwith opened out in a brand new line of business as a stock-man and rump steak dealer.

Taking the advice of the Anglo-French Press of the island, my festive friends, the would-be "corner men," came to terms, and in a week had bought me out, block, stock and (corned beef) barrel, at a price which, though it did not leave much margin for profit, was satisfactory enough under the circumstances.

This sort of wind up was a long way behind my ideal of an effective final tableau for a relief expedition, but, all the same, I could not help feeling that it met the case. Other historical undertakings of a like character, almost as great, have done worse. This soothing reflection mollified me.

As soon as possible, I drafted out a report to my Syndicate, but as I could find no mail steamer handy at the time to send over to the Cape with it, I had to keep the document until it became so stale that it would not have made any sensation at all; therefore, in a fit of disgust, I at last made spills of it. I forget now exactly what I said in that report, but this is something like my present idea of what it ought to have been :—

To the Chairman and Members of the Mauritius Famine Relief Committee, Cape Town.

GENTLEMEN,—I have the honour to report to you the progress and success attending the great philanthropic undertaking entrusted to my command.

Leaving Cape Town, we proceeded cautiously round the coast to Port Natal (30 deg. S. lat., 31 deg. E. long.).

Here I left a quill-driver in charge of a rear column, advising him to hunt round among the nearest ferocious tribes for whatever men and materials he might require in order to form the said column, and establish himself in a position of safety.

From Port Natal, the advance column, under myself, took an easterly direction across the dangerous depths of the Mozambique Channel towards the Island of Madagascar. Proceeding northward up the east coast of this savage country at considerable risk of being annihilated by the hostile tribes inhabiting the interior, and encountering the warlike demonstrations of the natives on the seaboard, who approached almost within sight, and were only kept away by a considerable expenditure of steam, we eventually arrived in safety at Tamatave (18 deg. S. lat., 49 deg. E. long.).

At this place we found the French in great force, and I regret to report that a body of their marines succeeded in boarding us, one small wing attacking our commissariat and carrying off about five pounds of provisions and a quantity of Bass's bitter. During the assault, various trophies of war fell into our possession, but were returned as a matter of international etiquette before the enemy retired.

By strategy, and at much peril, I subsequently effected a landing. Strong bodies of natives were ~~about~~, however, and I deemed it expedient to beat a retreat ~~on~~ board again, after failing to find any ivory or kudos worth appropriating.

Running the ~~blockade~~ the same night, we pushed on to Mauritius (20 ~~deg.~~ S. lat., 58 deg. E. long.). Here I had intended to ~~arrange~~ for an effective landing, with the flags of ~~all nations~~ floating around me, and everything and everybody else away behind in respectful obscurity; but as I failed to discern those ecstatic signs of joy which I had hoped for and expected from the benighted inhabitants whom I had come so far, and at such sacrifice, to relieve, I contented myself by going ashore in a small boat at the cost of half a rupee.

Although I met with most unworthy resistance from the natives of the island in my efforts to relieve them, I nevertheless insisted upon doing so (at prices ranging according to cut).

The health of the members of the expedition who have arrived here alive has been excellent, thanks to the beneficial effects derived from a liberal use of Mother Brown's Syrup of Squills (to be had in bottles from 1s. to 3s. 6d. at 119 Puffem Street, Soho).

My own life trembled in the balance at the start off, when I was seriously attacked with a complication of ailments, and was only saved by constantly tickling the soles of my feet with Squacker's Patent Fakerdelooloo Feathers (to be had in bales from 17s. 6d. to 53s. at Payswell Buildings, Manchester).

The lanterns, portable electric lighting apparatus and magnifying glasses, generously provided by the Committee, were, I regret to report, not called into requisition, no erebus-like thousand-mile forest, inhabited by midgets, having been met with, although every effort was made to find one.

Having renamed, after myself, most of the places visited by the expedition, it will be necessary to issue new maps for this part of the world, clearly indicating the position of Fort Osborne, Port Osborne, Osborne Pool, Osborne Falls, etc.

In closing my report, it only remains for me to add that the thanks of mankind are due to those whose munificence, and others whose intrepidity, have brought to such an eminently successful issue, an undertaking, the magnitude, the difficulties, and the

responsibilities of which it is impossible for the uninitiated to accurately estimate, and the results of which must be felt by countless generations to come.

Trusting that the Committee will be good enough to bear in mind its obligation to provide me with a fitting reception upon my return, including the banquets, freedoms, smart visiting and trotting-out generally, in terms of agreement,

I am, Gentlemen, etc.

After sending in a report somewhat in the foregoing terms, I should have followed it up sharp with strong details in book form, to have done the thing correctly; but instead of doing this I felt immensely relieved and satisfied to have done with what I regarded as a worrisome undertaking, and thankful to find myself free to attend to other business.

This other business, for a whole week, consisted principally in attending Port Louis races. There was no option. Everybody in the island seemed, as a matter of course, to give themselves up to the round of dissipation continuing during that race week.

Until these races came on, and fully developed quadrupeds from Europe and Australia put in an appearance, I had an impression that the biggest thing in the way of horseflesh that I was likely to see in Mauritius would be a breed of animal a little larger than a full-grown Newfoundland dog. I caught this idea from seeing nothing but small Batavian ponies trotting about, harnessed to large-sized covered goat carts, called carioles.

These ponies are similar to the intelligent little trained animals so often seen in circus troupes. They

are exceedingly strong, and have wonderful staying power, considering what diminutive creatures they are, but many of them are chock full of vice and trickery.

As I had a considerable amount of running about to do, I hired one of these pony cariole turn-outs, and was astonished at the pace and endurance of the toy trotter, that ran the Creole driver and myself often many miles without sign of fatigue.

At first I felt some compunction at adopting this mode of conveyance, jammed in as I was behind the driver, with my knees grinding into the small of his back. My concern was not for the driver, because it was part of the contract for me to prod him in the way I did, and he was probably corny where I planted my knees, there being no other place for anyone wedged in behind him to plant them. What I did think about was the bad appearance of the thing, from a cruelty-to-animals point of view, for two full-grown men to hitch themselves behind such a rat of a pony. However, I soon became re-assured when I saw that the game little creature in the shafts was more than equal to the task.

The Port Louis race meeting, which is held annually, and is promoted principally by the planters, was a very gay affair.

Pioneered by a prominent and genial member of the Mauritius Turf Club, I was enabled to pass a very pleasant time on the Champs de Mars, where the meeting was held.

In keeping with everything else in the island, the gathering was of a thoroughly cosmopolitan character, both as regarded owners, jockeys, and horses, and those who congregated as spectators; but the controlling element was decidedly French—in fact, the Champs de Mars was Longchamps, with a dash of Orientalism.

The long row of raised boxes, brightly decorated, and not unlike those to be seen in a theatre, were filled by as brightly decorated people, and lined the course in the vicinity of the winning-post. Away, on all sides, an immense number of people of all shades and nationalities gathered to witness each day's programme. Hindoos and Chinamen preponderated, apparently—the former making things lively at that part of the course where they had improvised a sort of Indian bazaar, by keeping up a mixed din of tom-toms and other noises that did not make me hanker to remain in it longer than I could help. Johnny Chinaman,

“ With the smile that was child-like and bland,”

was behaving himself more decorously.

Dressed neatly in his favourite blue blouse, and wearing an expression as wooden as the bottoms of his thick-soled shoes, he clumped around, and, as usual, kept his eye on the main chance, which, I conceive, on that particular occasion, was indulging his pet propensity for a gamble by backing the gee-gees.

A few miles out of Port Louis are situated the famous Pampè le Mousse Botanical Gardens—perhaps, as indeed I understand they are, the finest tropical public gardens in the world.

One afternoon I paid a visit to this tropical Kew, and must say I felt well rewarded for my trouble.

The gardens, which are beautifully kept, boast among other attractions one of the most perfect and stately avenues of palm trees known. Bread-fruit, cocoa, coffee, tea, dates, cocoanuts, pineapples and bananas are to be seen growing in natural luxuriance.

Here flourishes the quinine, croton, castor-oil, and cotton plants, and the hundred and one other treasures of botany indigenous to the fertile soil and tropical climate of the island.

Many of the paths are bordered with the curious "sensitive plant," which is so susceptible to the touch that upon being gently disturbed with one's stick or hand it immediately droops over and apparently dies, only, however, to recover again in a short time, if let alone.

It is in Pampè le Mousse Gardens, also, that the memory of Paul and Virginia has been perpetuated by the erection of an unpretending monument, now greatly weather-stained.

As I stood contemplating this sear-worn tribute to a love-sick maid and her faithful swain, the gushing platitudes of the old-time love story were recalled vividly to my mind.

Away in the seclusion of yonder mountains, where the babbling waters of the Fan Palm River lent their peaceful music to the otherwise still and silent scene, these guileless children of nature passed the early days of their sunny lives together. Hand in hand they tripped along through life—no care, no pain, to mar the fair prospect, nor o'ercloud their happiness.

They knew naught of the great unhallowed world around them; no tainted thought, no evil impulse stirred them. Pleasure unalloyed was theirs. But stay; let the ardent Paul speak for himself. This is what he used to say to Virginia when he felt in tall form. "When I am tired, the sight of you, my beloved sister, refreshes me." (She was not his sister, of course, but she had promised to be just like one to him.) "When I am at the summit of the mountain, if I perceive you in the vale below, you seem to me in the midst of our orchard, like a fragrant rosebud. In going towards home, the partridge, when it runs to its young, steps less lightly, and appears less beautiful than you do. When the trees intercept my view, I need not to behold you to know where you are; I know not what, but there is something of you remains behind, in the air through which you have passed, and even the grass where you have sat retains an impression of you. When I approach you, my senses are all delight. The azure of heaven loses its charms when compared with the blue of your eyes; the sound of your voice excels in sweetness the note of



the amadavid bird. If my finger touches you, a thrill of pleasure overspreads my whole soul. Have you forgotten the day when we crossed the great stones of the river of the Three Peaks? I was ready to sink before we reached the bank, but no sooner had I taken you in my arms than I acquired fresh strength. What is the charm by which you have so enchanted me? It cannot be your wisdom—our mothers possess more than either of us. Is it your caresses? That cannot be—our mothers embrace me oftener than you do. It must be your goodness. Never will that day be erased from my memory when you walked barefooted to the Black River to request pardon for a poor slave. Here, my beloved, accept this flowering branch of the orange tree, I cut it for you in the forest. Refresh yourself with this honeycomb, which I found at the top of the rocks; but lean first upon my bosom, and I shall be refreshed." And then Paul would shut down for repairs, and give 'Ginny a chance, who, after a spell for yumming, would start in on the same lines, and say something quite as nice to him.

Those were the good old days.

## CHAPTER VIII.

LODGINGS AFLOAT—A PAGAN CONCERT—SOMETHING WRONG WITH THE MOON—I CHANGE MY LODGINGS—I VISIT A MOSQUE—AN ARAB SCHOOL: TRAIN UP THE YOUNG IN THE WAY THEY SHOULD SHOUT—"FOOLS STEP IN WHERE——"—LOSS OF PROPERTY IN CONSEQUENCE—A SWEET SUBJECT—I BID ADIEU TO MAURITIUS.

THE Mauritius fever, about which I had heard so much, did not put in an appearance during my stay, perhaps out of regard for the half guinea's worth of quinine I had been induced to invest in before leaving the Cape—an unnecessary precaution, by the bye, somewhat on a par with taking coals to Newcastle, seeing that Mauritius is a home of quinine. One afternoon, certainly, a very stifling and unpleasant wind prevailed, which I was told was the fever wind, and usually acted as a sure precursor of an epidemic, but nothing alarming did ensue nevertheless. The season was too early to have anticipated any serious prevalence of fever, but being a new comer I was advised that in any case it would be better not to sleep ashore if I could avoid it. I therefore arranged for a continuance of the sleeping accommodation for the

men and myself, on board the "Darlton Hall" while she remained in port.

For three or four nights this arrangement of sleeping afloat worked well enough, but on the fifth night a horde of fanatics in a Hindoo temple, or a Chinese joss-house, or a lunatic asylum (it was full moon), right abreast of us on shore, commenced a hideously monotonous row that sounded like a chorus of hoarse cats (assorted sexes) singing plaintive love-songs to the incessant beat of tom-toms.

Its monotony was maddening. For agonising effect it even left London tile music far behind—there was nothing impassioned about it, no blood-curdling wails from Tom to make you leap up in bed and grasp the boot-jack, no heartrending response from a feline prima donna, no impressive periods of silence wherein to brace yourself together for the next shock. It was one continuous dum-dum-wow-ow-wow, dum-dum-wow-ow-wow all the night through, with disgusting persistency, and it nearly gave me the horrors.

The next night it was the same, and being warm weather I tossed about on my back, wide awake, down in the stuffy cabin, waiting for a change in the programme, or a spell for refreshments in that heathenish concert, until I almost worked myself into a fever, and then, as I could stand it no longer, I put on my slippers, grabbed my smoking tackle, and went up on deck in my sleeping suit, to lounge about and smoke my pipe until the moon went down three hours

afterwards, and the sinners on shore had another lucid interval pending further lunar disturbance on the following night.

Upon inquiry, I learned that the cause of all the shindy was a Pagan festival of the moon,—an interesting affair that was likely to continue for about a week. Under the circumstances, and especially as the captain did not seem inclined to fall in with my suggestion to steam out to sea each night until the lunar joy business was over, I determined to change my lodging arrangements without delay. So the same day that I decided to give the dum-dum-wow-wow-wallahs best, I went ashore and courted death from Mauritius fever for a change, by taking up hotel quarters for the remainder of my stay.

One oppressively hot afternoon, as I chanced to be passing the main portals of the principal Arab mosque in Port Louis, I gladly left the noise and glare of the dusty thoroughfare behind me, and with some degree of curiosity entered the sacred precincts of the Temple of the Prophet.

The archway through which I passed led into a large and beautifully-paved courtyard, surrounded by corridors opening into it. In the centre was situated a stone bath filled with water, used for the ablution of the faithful, while away on the opposite side to where I stood could be seen the inner entrances to the mosque itself. Here and there in the cool angles and shady recesses of the corridors were small isolated

groups of Mahommedans, resting from the heat of the day—some discussing, with animated gestures, a knotty point; others, the majority of them, squatting or lolling about with true Oriental indolence, and with an air expressive of drowsy indifference to all things and all men. Observing that my presence was not taken amiss, I was leisurely sauntering round the courtyard, with a view to entering the mosque, when my attention was attracted by a sound of subdued shouting.

Wondering what strange forces were at work to call forth such an amount of vocal exertion in such a place and in weather so languishing, I followed up the direction whence the noise proceeded, and turning off to the right, down a short passage, and thence through a half-open doorway, I quickly solved the apparent mystery. It was an Arab school.

Sitting or kneeling on the floor in couples, with small wooden stools supporting a book in front of them, were about a hundred dark-eyed, copper-coloured Arab children, with shaven heads and naked feet, engaged, might and main, in shouting, at the top of their voices, short sentences of Arabic in quick succession, with a vehemence that made the veins stand out in knots on the youngsters' foreheads, and seemed to shake the very walls. The teacher, a thorough type of better class Mussulman, was an intelligent-looking, middle-aged man, with a black beard and swarthy complexion. Attired in a long,

loose, white gown, his feet encased in curly-toed slippers, his head enveloped in a huge turban, he was standing in the midst of the children, leading them by bawling as vigorously as themselves. My entrance into the room seemed in no way to discompose the young Mahommedans, who continued to shout as lustily as ever, notwithstanding that their teacher left them to their own devices, and approaching me, cordially shook hands, and with charming suavity gave me to understand, in excellent English, that he was pleased to greet me as a visitor, informing me, at the same time, that he was giving the children a lesson from the Koran. It was all intensely interesting, but a little of the Koranic music went a very long way; so thanking my friend, the Arab schoolmaster, by shouting like a bo'swain in a gale of wind, I soon bade him farewell and retired.

Upon regaining the corridor, I saw that by cutting across an angle of the courtyard I could reach the entrance to the mosque in a few steps. I naturally enough did not hesitate to go this way. I soon wished I had not.

Before I had gone half-a-dozen yards into the open space, awful yells arose from all quarters of the courtyard. The sleepy aspect of the place was changed in an instant, the air was rent with wild ejaculations, and rushing towards me from all sides came angry, barefooted Mussulmans. I stood rooted to the ground—to the tiles of the courtyard. Another five years dropped

off my life when I recognised that in some unaccountable way I had aroused the fanatical fury of these men.

I thought of the Moors in Spain, of the Bulgarian atrocities, of Mahdism and Gordon's fate, of everything unpleasant I had ever heard or read about that had been done by the co-religionists of my assailants.

Angrily crowding round me, they pointed in a terribly significant manner at my boots, and made most uncalled-for remarks in tones that convinced me they were not gentlemen, and that their manners had been quite as shamefully neglected as my education in Arabic. I tried to persuade myself that after all religion had nothing whatever to do with it—they were only rival shoeblacks perhaps, a trifle over anxious for a job, boots being scarce and trade bad with them. And then again, I thought they might possibly be backsheesh hunters, bent on making me pay my footing.

Following up the latter theory, I felt unspeakably relieved to think that a little judicious distribution of cash would settle the difficulty, and, producing a few coins, benevolently offered them round. Instead of having the desired effect, the Arabs became more clamorous than ever, and, to my utter astonishment, refused to take the money. At last one of them spluttered out "goody ground," and quickly enough the nature of my offence was plain to me. I was standing on holy ground with covered feet!

Much as I regretted the mistake I had made, the only way I could see to remedy matters was to retreat from the blessed spot upon which I stood, as quickly as possible. This I attempted to do, but was immediately seized hold of on all sides by the Arabs, who by this time were making such a hubbub, and becoming so offensively demonstrative, that I felt my patience sorely tried, and, but for the fact that I fully realised the delicacy of my position, and the folly of resisting, I should have been tempted to try force as a means of making my way out through them. As it was, I submitted to have my booted feet swathed in a couple of linen waistbands. This being done, I was permitted to hobble back the few yards to the corridor.

The excitement which this little incident had created soon simmered down, and seeing no reason why I should clear out just as I was beginning to understand the ways of the place so nicely, I started once more for the mosque entrance, this time by way of the corridor. Arrived at the entrance, I stood outside and looked in.

Being of an inquiring turn of mind, the more I looked the more I wanted to go inside, until at last I could restrain my curiosity no longer. Learning a lesson from my experience in the courtyard, I resolved this time to be on the safe side, the more so because I noticed that my movements were not altogether unobserved.



Before entering the sanctuary, I not only took off my boots, but my socks as well, and, for want of a better place, deposited these useful articles of Christian apparel at the foot of a large pillar close to the entrance. Turning up the bottoms of my trousers, I then paddled inside—I say paddled, because it reminded me a good deal of the days when, as a boy at the seaside, I used to delight in paddling on the golden shore. Walking barefooted on the cool stones into that mosque, on a sultry afternoon, was quite as refreshing as any golden shore I ever heard of; and as for appearance, well—I tried to calculate how pleased I should be if I met a few folk inside whom I knew, but I couldn't work it out.

The interior of the mosque disappointed me. Beyond the undoubted beauty of the inlaid stone floor, and the spaciousness of the building, there was nothing whatever to commend itself to the eye as being in any way worthy of admiration. There was no shrine of any kind, no delicately executed handiwork to relieve the prevailing monotony of architecture.

Added to an extravagant barber pole-like style of party-coloured decoration in red, blue, yellow, and green, there was a ghostlike gloom about the place which helped to give it a curiously unpleasant semblance to a gaudy crypt—if it is possible to imagine a gaudy crypt—the dim religious light being admitted into the temple through small crescent-shaped windows high up on the side walls.

The devout Mahomedan prays at all times, and at all seasons, and not a few were so engaged in the mosque when I entered. With frequent and profound salaams down to the very ground, each devotee as he knelt upon his small square of carpet was muttering his supplication with a fervency that left little doubt as to the sincerity of the worshipper.

After a while, having sufficiently satisfied my curiosity, I wended my way out of the place, and sought my boots and socks at the spot where I had left them at the entrance. They were gone! I searched every nook and corner near by, but they were nowhere to be seen. Instinctively I paddled off to the nearest group of drowsy Arabs, a few yards away, and opened up negotiations for recovery of the missing property. I eloquently drew attention to my shoeless condition, and made them thoroughly comprehend that about twenty short minutes before, I had possessed two socks and a new pair of fourteen rupee boots, which I should be glad to have the loan of if they could conveniently spare them. Instead of giving me a sympathetic reply, or offering an intelligent suggestion, they just smiled a sardonic smile, and passed me on to the next loungers, and in this way I navigated round the premises without result, until I had politely asked every Arab in the place whether he had disposed of my boots yet, and if not, whether they were to be had on hire for a short time, as I wanted to go home. The true hang of the saying,

that "there's nothing like leather" —especially shoe-leather—came home to me then for the first time.

I felt exasperated. I had an important appointment in a quarter of an hour's time, and there I was playing Arab—street arab—round a mosque, with the prospect of having to scoot through the streets of Port Louis minus boots and socks, in order to get back to my hotel.

Just as I was commencing to feel dangerous enough to run amuck with my white umbrella among the skulkers in the corridors, my eye fell on a means of deliverance. A pair of huge but elegant-looking Turkish shoes reposed peacefully in a quiet corner, with their curled-up toes gracefully pointing heavenward. The obese harem-owner to whom they likely belonged was probably engaged inside the mosque, or perhaps was one of the three followers of the Prophet who, at the time, were laving their feet in the holy fountain in the centre of the courtyard. Howbeit, I resolved to borrow the articles. With the inspiration of an Artful Dodger, I hovered about until I had an opportunity of lifting them into the sheltering folds of my immaculate gamp. This done, I promptly did a guy for the street, and slipping on the Oriental gondolas slopped away to my hotel as fast as I could.

I returned the borrowed articles at once, but I never recovered my boots—they were the price I paid for walking on holy ground.

In the course of business, I had occasion to visit one or two of the large sugar plantations in the island.

Here, as elsewhere in Mauritius, the controlling element was French—that is to say, French creole, for home-born Frenchmen are not very numerous in the Isle of France. Indian coolies, as they are generally termed, have, ever since the abolition of slavery, supplied the bulk of the labour. These Hindoo labourers, as in Natal, are principally brought down from Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta, and are indentured to the planters at very fair wages for stated periods, being conveyed back to India at the expiration of their engagements.

The coolie traffic is directly controlled by the Government, and the interests and welfare of the Hindoos are, if anything, too jealously guarded, at the expense and to the considerable embarrassment at times of the employers, who, within recent years, have more than once seriously kicked against the pricks of officialism. A notable instance of the planters' antipathy to this coolie dry nursing was the intense popular disfavour shown towards a late Governor, who persisted in carrying his Hong Kong, if not Exeter Hall, tactics to such lengths, that it culminated in his temporary recall by the Home Government, pending the institution of an inquiry, which in due course resulted in the reinstatement of his Excellency.

The cane mills erected for the purpose of crushing the juice out of the canes, and converting it into

different crude forms of sugar and other saccharine products, are mostly situated in the middle of the plantations, approachable only—at the time of my visit—through long vistas of waving sugar-canes. These mills appear to be of the simplest construction, and resemble, as much as anything, huge steel mangles, the canes being passed through the arrangement of rollers. The refuse of the crushed canes, after it is dry, is utilised as fuel in the specially-constructed furnaces of the boilers, and in this way the enormous quantity of what would otherwise be accumulating rubbish, is made to serve an economical purpose by its riddance.

My visits to these mills were marked by an unusually large consumption of sugar-water—a favourite beverage with the planters in the hot weather. To behold the way they champion this nauseating decoction on to strangers would delight the hearts of blue ribbonists beyond measure, but I am not a blue ribbonist myself, and consequently failed to be delighted. The pseudo-Frenchmen seemed to prefer it even to their beloved claret, of which, by-the-bye, an enormous quantity, of a very passable quality, is retailed in Mauritius at about sixpence a quart.

When the sugar season is in full swing, the scene on the quays of Port Louis, I should imagine, must be a sweet and merry one. It had hardly begun when I left, but even then the mountains of sugar were assuming big proportions, and the hundreds of

naked coolies filling, weighing, carrying, and sewing up the "pockets" containing the staple product of Mauritius, afforded a novel and entertaining sight.

At the expiration of a few weeks, I was ready to leave the island. With the surviving members of the expedition accompanying me, I took passage in a mail steamer going direct to Cape Town, and notwithstanding the discomforting fact that all my fellow-voyagers in the saloon but two—a judge and a naval officer—were what the sailors ominously called sky-pilots (most of them the refugee missionaries from Madagascar), no serious weather was encountered, our run to Table Bay being pleasant but uneventful.

## CHAPTER IX.

SOUTH AFRICAN STATESMANSHIP—I DABBLE IN POLITICS—A  
POLITICAL ORGANISATION OF A REMARKABLE KIND—AN  
UNPROFITABLE BUSINESS—I THROW UP POLITICS—BERT  
NEGLECTS HIS MISSION IN LIFE—DESPERATE OUTLOOK IN  
CONSEQUENCE.

○F all the great British possessions, India alone excepted, there is assuredly not one where the intricacies of tribal border troubles are so great, where imperial, as distinguished from colonial, interests are so conflicting, nor where the racial question assumes such paramount importance, as at the Cape.

The administrative problems are rapidly becoming more complex, more difficult of solution, as the acquisition of territory proceeds, and the sphere of influence increases year by year.

A remarkable era of political activity and national aggrandisement seems to have set in throughout Equatorial and South-east Africa, the end of which it is difficult to forecast, unless indeed the progress of events now taking place trend—so far as the southern

portion of the "dark" Continent is concerned—toward the consummation of one great South African federation—a federation that must extend from the banks of the Zambesi to Cape Agulhas.

Notwithstanding the magnitude of the interests involved, and the need for able statesmanship, South Africa has yet to establish a practical school of politics turning out men whose time, means, and abilities are commensurate with the responsibilities they seek to take upon themselves—men whose aims and ambitions are something more than the mere sweets and perquisites of office or a free trip to town during session.

The gladiators who enter the arena proper of political strife at the Cape are comparatively few and nondescript. Statesmen are at a severe premium, professional politicians at a discount. The loaves and fishes, and even the crumbs of office, have been as the very breath of life to the handful of hungry ones, who, for some years, have rung ding-dong the changes of party politics between them.

Fresh blood has of late, however, been infused into the body-politic at the Cape; not before it was needed, truly.

Another Richmond is in the field—one who (with a fair meed of support) can, and it is to be hoped will, raise Cape politics to something above the puerility of Africander Bonds and Empire Leagues. And the promising change observable is not likely to



lack the stimulating influence of a progressive Press. Journalistic enterprise both in the Cape and Natal is remarkably in evidence. Considering the diversity and contentious character of many of the interests involved as coming within the range of public discussion, and the necessity of catering for a sparsely distributed bi-lingual population, as yet but little concerned with the great movements of the time, this is the more surprising, and reflects some credit upon the members of the fourth estate, who, confident in the big future of the country, strive with no mean ability to remove the deep-seated racial prejudices which have so long constituted fatal stumbling blocks in the path of South African unity and progress.

When I returned from Mauritius, a general election was pending, and after a short interval allowed me for rest, in order to recover from the severe strain of expeditioning, and to restore my shattered health by sojourning quietly for a month with my friend Eves the farmer, I was recalled to Cape Town, and inspanned to the political chariot designed to carry a certain aspirant for political honours triumphantly into the colonial House of Lords, otherwise that august assembly known as the Legislative Council.

The electoral division courted did not require much wooing, a circumstance somewhat fortunate perhaps, seeing that our candidate was an uncompromising bachelor, and not given to surpassing eloquence. The result was an easy victory, and with

it I anticipated release from electioneering, and a return to work more in accordance with my taste; for, unlike Bert, I am not much of a politician, and when public affairs are managed anyway to my satisfaction I am content, for the most part, to let other men make the laws or even run the Premiership. But no sooner was our man made Honourable, than a party colleague of his, who was made trustworthy at the same time for another division, did something that somebody else said he ought not to have done, and accordingly, on petition, he was unseated. This necessitated reelection, and, as a matter of course, I was turned over to assist in reclaiming him.

It was a tough job, and by the time the process was completed the elections for the lower house—the House of Assembly—came on, and I found myself perforce participating in the organisation of a political association.

This was a prodigiously unique affair, with objects so far reaching that we often lost sight of them. Although we were not exactly affiliated with either the Aborigines Protection Society or the Peace Society, there was decided analogy in our labours; we were working for a common end—the millennium or the deluge. We selected only those righteous candidates whose political creeds were entirely in accord with our own, and every free and unenlightened elector who was privileged to join us had to take something akin to an oath that he would vote, plump, or otherwise do

as he was bid on election day by the officers of the association.

It was a grand conception, and one that had a fortune in it. Bert sent me to Coventry for a whole day when, long afterwards, I told him that I had come through my brief political career a poor but honest man.

As I have already suggested, politics don't enthral me. I can always tear myself away from them. I tore myself away from them after these elections, and, for a twelvemonth, led a peaceful, retired life, trying to earn some money—it was more profitable. I was merging into solvency, and thinking about starting a banking account once more, and going to look round to see if I could find anyone who, by mere chance, I had not mortally offended, when public affairs went all wrong again.

It was just my luck. All this bliss was meant for Bert. He had come out to the country specially to put things right, but instead of doing it he had gone off to Natal, and left me to attend to the business. I wrote and told him how ratty the outlook was, and begged him to come round and give me a hand, as I thought of making a change or two in the Government.

Instead of coming along at once, and taking over the Premiership, as I expected he would, he sent me one of his characteristic six-line replies, saying I must patch up affairs as well as I could for the present, as he had something else on.

Filibustering was going on in Bechuanaland ; the Cape people had one of their bad attacks of premature indignation, and, as usual, were threatening to ruin the British Empire by quitting it, unless Downing Street did exactly what they imagined to be the right thing ; trade was bad ; finances worse.

## CHAPTER X.

WARREN'S BECHUANALAND "CANARY BOYS"—SOME SWAGGER SOLDIERS—I GO ON A RAILWAY PICNIC UP COUNTRY—SOCIAL AMENITIES ON COLONIAL RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION—THIRTEEN MURDERS AND A MONTHLY RIOT—I MAKE THE ACQUAINTANCE OF A "PERFECT LADY"—A GROG-HUNTING EXPEDITION—BAGGING A BUSHRANGER—ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE HEATHEN—A TUG-O'-WAR—A CASE FOR THE WITCH-DOCTORS—THE ORANGE RIVER IN FLOOD.

IT was at this juncture that Sir Charles Warren's Bechuanaland Expedition was formed—the canary boys. What a sight it was to see the Piccadilly "deah boys" in Methuen's Horse soldiering in yellow corduroys! They were the reputed *crème de la crème* of the home contingent of volunteers taking part in the expedition, and I went on board the transport to have a look at them when they arrived at Cape Town. Dainty, lady-like troopers they were, verily, as they stalked about carrying greasy mess buckets at arms' length, or gingerly swabbed down quarters with the too utterly hideous mops. How they dandied through those fatigue duties! How they abhorred those fustians! What a quite too different picture was their ideal of soldiering! With what relentless cruelty did the immutable Warren confine the dear boys to

barracks on the only night they were in Cape Town, thwarting at every turn their burning desire to spend their pocket-money in painting the camp red, and spoiling with the relentless hand of a martinet all their little schemes for having a right royal time of it on such a jolly Queen's picnic !

But they soaked down to it like true Britons when they had been up country under canvas awhile, and after unburdening their souls by a good all-round set-in at growling, they played Tommy Atkins better than most people expected of them.

There were grave misgivings that Sir Charles Warren had more serious work in front of him than actually turned out to be the case, and for military reasons it was deemed advisable to complete to the Diamond Fields (Kimberley), as expeditiously as possible, the trunk-line from Cape Town, which had then only reached the banks of the Orange River, seventy-eight miles south of Kimberley. As an inducement to the Cape Government to do this, the Imperial authorities undertook to advance the money necessary for the purpose, at reasonable interest, on condition that the work was immediately commenced, and the line opened for traffic to the Diamond Fields within seven months. The offer was accepted, and my philanthropic friends of Mauritius fame once more bestirred themselves on behalf of suffering humanity by taking a keen interest in the contract, even including in their benevolent care the commissariat

arrangements—no mean task, considering the army of men to be provided for, the nature and extent of country over which they were distributed, and the break-neck manner in which the work had to be pushed forward.

At a few hours' notice I was despatched up country, and remained in the Sahara-like wastes of Griqualand West for nearly a twelvemonth—a cross between a commissary-general, a fighting trader, and a missionary.

What a picnic it was !

I had been fretting after a thoroughly colonial, free-and-easy, unconventional sort of life, ever since I had arrived in the country, and, as I journeyed toward the interior for the first time, the train winding up the beautiful Hex River Valley, climbing the serpent-like track over the Hex River Mountains to an altitude of three thousand five hundred feet, along giddy ledges and precipitous embankments, and rushing down into the barren expanse of the Great Karoo country beyond, I thought how delightful this veritable flight from civilisation was.

And when we had accomplished the five hundred and odd miles to the great Orange River, which sweeps across from the South Atlantic coast almost to the shores of the Indian Ocean—a distance of a thousand miles or more—I felt, oh ! so happy at the prospect of having a genuine good time of it away from the thralldom of city routine.

Before that railway was finished, all the genuine good time I had fretted after was mine.

There is a flaw somewhere in the social organism on colonial railway construction; leastway, there was a biggish flaw in the society I met with in that bit of wilderness between Orange River and the Diamond Fields. Thirteen murders and a monthly riot ought to satisfy any man who hasn't a proprietary interest in a police gazette or burial ground, or a morbid yearning for blood.

It was about the fag-end of the depression from which South Africa had been suffering so long, and in response to the urgent demand for the large amount of labour necessary to complete the line within the stipulated period, all the social *débris*, and accumulated black and white riff-raff of the country, concentrated itself in those railway camps. At one time, when the work was in full swing, considerably more than three thousand men were distributed over the sandy stretch of desolate country through which the railway was to pass. Of this number, roughly speaking, two-thirds were blacks and the remainder whites. For downright cast-off humanity you had to look among the latter section. The blacks were gentlemen in comparison to them. Horny-handed, honest old navvies are a worthy class enough, but they were scarcely represented. The set of "pinchers" we had to contend with were wandering loafers of every nationality. Whilst they could be kept hard at it on the earthwork



sections, without intoxicants, and with no money, they were fairly tame, and, like the nomadic tribes of old, led a simple, if not guileless tent life in the wilderness. But after pay-day each month they became playful—even rompy. The acquisition of wealth was unhinging, and their spirits (anything from methylated to best cognac) got the better of them. Then, for about a week it was a case of stand from under. The festivities took various forms. Two gentlemen, Mr. Bully Billy and Mr. Nobby Bones (not forgetting his lady, Mrs. Nobby Bones, who ably assumed the command when her noble spouse was *hors de combat*), usually led their respective gangs on a grog-hunting, Kilkenny-cat crusade, doing their level best to exterminate each other by having a pitched battle with blankers. Other larrikins would go a filibustering, and make playful raids on the isolated stores, or swoop down on an unwary sutler and turn him inside out.

The kafirs, if left alone, would have given little trouble. But their enlightened white brethren took the initiative by sticking them up, knocking them down, and otherwise acting in such a superior manner towards them, that it resulted at last in the establishment of a regular feud between the two—in the end more than one white having the life battered out of him with knobkerries, the niggers in return receiving a corresponding amount of attention.

During pay-time there was but scant respect shown for either person or property, and the engineers and

those of us who had to perambulate the seventy miles between Orange River and the Diamond Fields, had the full benefit of the existing state of lawlessness, riding alone, as we were frequently obliged to, at all hours of the day and night. For days the country would be more or less strewn with the besotted knights of labour (!) in all stages of drunkenness and riot, some lying unconscious in the burning sun stripped by the kafirs of every rag they possessed, others brawling round the camps; some making it their business to molest wayfarers, others to maraud the natives; while the latter combined to increase the disturbances, not only by retaliating on the Europeans in every possible way, but further by engaging in frenzied tribal rows—Basutos against Cape kafirs, Zulus against Griquas, and so forth—in which war-dances, knobkerries, and assegais figured prominently and effectively.

At last things became so thoroughly lively, and we were altogether having such a genuine good time of it, burying defunct pinchers and mending broken niggers, that it seemed greedy not to share the joy with others. A force of Cape Mounted Rifles was therefore sent up from King Williams Town to join in the fun, and they kept us company until the show was over.

Being usually well mounted, I suffered no particular harm. One rascal, however—who was mealy-mouthed enough when sober, but an awful little scoundrel when the spirits moved him (monthly, of course)—caused me a lot of trouble and discomfort,

after a certain incident had occurred, by persistently waylaying me and playing bushranger, until I found an effective way of literally shutting him up. He first introduced himself to my notice by taking the heavy lead in a troupe of Nobby Bones's performing pinchers, who were bombarding a store when I came on the scene one day.

Mr. Nobby Bones being absent through indisposition, Mrs. Nobby, as a kind of Joan of Arc, was acting the part of leading lady in command, and oh! what a lady she was!

Wishing, for diplomatic reasons, to assume a peaceful, benevolent attitude, I rode quietly up to them and asked their grievance. Desisting from their attack on the store, they turned their attention to me. It was very polite of them. Mrs. Nobby affectionately clutched hold of me by the leg nearest my heart, on one side, while my bushranger friend clung to the stirrup leather on the other, the remainder of the party, who were still sober enough to stand, hanging on to bridle, crupper, or whatever else they could get hold of.

As usual, they were on a grog hunt, and I declined to assist them. Of course, I broke the news as gently as possible, but the effect was the same as though I had raved at them like a temperance lecturer.

Sulphur began to fly. Mrs. Nobby intimated in courtly language that I had grossly insulted her, and the bushranger said the Australian coroners could

testify that he had snuffed many a man for much less when he was with Kelly's gang, and it was fortunate for me that he had been compelled, like Mrs. Bones and his other pals around, to part with his shooting irons for a time, on account of domestic affliction. But they made up for absence of artillery among them by trying to "wish-bone" me. Fortunately I was too tough, and didn't snap. Mrs. Nobby then ordered the boys on. My horse hitherto had remained discreetly meek; but I knew his mettle, and seeing that the business was turning sultry, I gave him a dig with the spurs and left him to do the rest. He did it. He let out both ends at once, and all sides at a time. Mrs. Nobby, without apology, floated into the air about six feet, and came down with a curdling shriek. Another dig and I was waltzed out from among the prostrate pinchers before they could hand in a protest.

The ranger was the only one who continued to maintain his connection with me. The only way I could persuade him to sever it, was by stroking him down with my riding crop. For some reason this broke our friendship (the crop too), and he continued to make things unpleasant for me for two or three months afterwards, until, as I have said, I discovered a means of disposing of him. This was a simple matter, as I noticed that each pay-time he invariably haunted the same spot, in proximity to the same store, and ever in a similar state of befuddledum.

I had a ration-waggon brought along manned by a strapping lad or two, and my friend shuffled into the big wicker basket, large enough for half-a-dozen such as he to lie full length in. The lid being securely fixed down, he was then carted off to a quiet salubrious spot, for a change of air and the benefit of his health, and kept there until he had kicked himself sober and sensible.

This was the seamy side of life, as I experienced it, on what was the quickest and rowdiest piece of railway construction yet on record in the country. Before I returned to Cape Town, upon completion of the line, I saw much of pleasing interest that helped, luckily, to minimise somewhat the utter discomfort of existence amidst such surroundings, where sleep, meals, rest, and relaxation, had to be taken catch-as-catch-can fashion, and where physical as well as mental wear and tear made a maximum demand upon the best man's capacity.

The famous diamond mines of Kimberley; the flooding of the great Orange River, as only African rivers do flood; the many curious types and habits of the semi-barbarous natives, who came in large numbers to work on the railway; and innumerable other sights and experiences, were entirely new to me.

Among the native labourers I should roughly calculate that every tribe within a radius of five hundred miles was represented.

The big majority of these were the primitive article, too ; the mission-station masher and the other too knowing " gentlemen of colour " to be met with in the towns, were conspicuously absent.

Talking of mission-station and town natives, if ever there was truth in the old adage that says " a little knowledge is dangerous " it is surely so with the generality of these semi-educated, half-christianised darkies. For this reason an African mission sermon upsets me—when I get caught in one. In the



abstract I feel that I must sympathise with the object, but, having seen something of the seedy results attained, my feelings become painfully mixed as the speaker waxes eloquent in his appeal for the "good cause."

Upon the methods, or the well-meaning efforts of the many worthy missionaries, I make no comment, I only deal with a direful physiological fact when I state that the average raw aboriginal is far less prone to ingratitude, lying, thieving, humbugging, and general sinnerising, than his knowledge-bespattered brothers who hail from the mission-stations, or have filtered through other so-called sources of enlightenment.

The key of knowledge unlocks the golden gate of the straight path and the creaky wicket of the crooked by-way alike, and unfortunately the newly-enlightened African has a remarkable aptitude for starting away down the latter, once he has left the guiding hand of his teachers. Perhaps time will effect a change; the sudden transition from darkness to light may be too much for the virgin mind of the unsophisticated heathen to stand; may-be it requires a generation or two to prepare it for the flooding radiance of theology and the alphabet. Anyhow, the lack of education in the black camps did not hurt us more than we could nurse through; things might have been a bit brisker, certainly, with an extra murder or two, and a few forgeries thrown in, but we were not greedy, and passed on satisfied with what we had.

Some of the native "boys"—especially the Zulus—were, physically, fine fellows. As I have said, most of them were the raw material; they hadn't been to school, didn't carry toothpicks, wore something in front, nothing behind, and, with the exception of their bed-kit—a kafir blanket—could have lost their spare gear in a pill-box.

Their native names being as a rule a good way beyond the ken of most Europeans, and our christenings equally unpronounceable to them, a mutual system of redubbing was adopted. Under the gangership of Mr. Bully Billy's fraternity, the Smiths, Browns and Robinsons became represented among the niggers by

"Shillings," "Sixpences," and "Brandies," a select few answering to Snowball, Blackboy, Pumpkin, Silly-billy, etc.

Their acquaintance with modern appliances was less than limited.

A gang of thirty or forty new boys was put on one day to shunt a locomotive with steam up. It was just an experiment devised to trim their muscles before they went on the regular work. Hanging on to the rope attached to the engine's coupling for the purpose, they were beginning to haul her slowly along the metals when a head of steam was eased on.



It plumed them up on end, and lopped them over quietly in the opposite direction. They guessed it was only something lumpy in the road, and picking themselves together made a fresh start. But it was no go; in spite of getting warmed up to the job, and yelling at each other to bend on, the loco. puffed off with them up-hill at the rate of about five miles an hour, for a hundred yards or so. When asked what sort of men they reckoned they were to allow a heap of iron to pull them over like that—after sniffing round the engine, getting their hair put out of curl by a sudden shriek from the whistle, and holding an animated debate on the subject well out of range, they passed their unanimous opinion that the "fire horse"



was a box of tricks that ought to be smelt out by the witch doctors, and volunteered to bring along their professional assistance when the next bit of hauling had to be done.

As for the flooding of the Orange River, it was a worthy sight to behold.

For many months in the year; the river is scarcely more than an insignificant stream, considering that it receives the drainage of one of the great watersheds of Southern Africa. Given a succession of perishing droughts and dry seasons, such as not infrequently occur in the country, and, indeed, there is naught left to mark the course of the Amazon of these latitudes but a parched trail, at any rate in its upper reaches. A dry, sandy indentation, broken by forbidding masses of iron stone, skirted by the stunted timber lining its banks, and tortuously winding away as far as the eye can reach, is all that remains of the great waterway.

Contrast this with the mighty torrent, rushing, surging, foaming impetuously oceanwards, after the flood-gates of the heavens have been opened! The trickling rivulet, the parched river-bed, become submerged with appalling rapidity. Everything in its path is borne helplessly, hopelessly, forward before the remorseless onrush of waters. See there before your eyes cattle, sheep, goats, swept past you in the great angry river, now upwards of a quarter of a mile in width! Woe betide the man or beast o'ertaken by such a deluge. Even ponderous boulders and firmly-

rooted trees are torn like weeds from their lodgments and drawn into the mighty current. Higher and higher, and still higher, the great river rises as you gaze, until at last the very banks are threatened with submersion. And then Nature stays her hand. Slowly, but surely, the waters subside; the turgid river gradually loses its power; and ere many days have passed, perhaps, there is little left to record this truly wondrous revelation of the majesty of the elements, but the dank weeds and muddy pools in the riverless river-bed.

## CHAPTER XI.

SPARKS AMONG THE DIAMONDS—I DETERMINE TO CLEAR FOR THE GOLD FIELDS—DEPARTURE BY "DUTCH EXPRESS"—MY TRAVELLING COMPANIONS—"PUT ME IN MY LITTLE BED"—SENTIMENT AND DISASTER—THE GOOD POINTS OF BLACK JACK GRASS—OUR COMMISSARIAT ARRANGEMENTS.

**A**LTHOUGH at this period I saw much of the Diamond Fields, they have since so changed with the introduction of underground mining, and the consolidation of the industry under the control of one large company, that I reserve until later on in these pages, a fuller reference to the famous mines, content here to mention that at this time (1885), when the railway reached the Fields, the open working of the mines with aerial gears was still in full swing.

The peculiar whizzing sound of the ponderous iron buckets, each capable of containing a ton of soil, fell on the ear day and night, as they rapidly sped up and down the countless mighty steel ropeways stretching away like giant cobwebs into the gaping excavations, to a depth in some places of over five hundred feet; and, combined with the terrific booming of the big blasting operations, which shook the camps with earthquake violence, gave the Fields a remarkable air

of life and activity, strangely in contrast with the comparatively hushed condition of things apparent since burrowing, instead of quarrying has become the favoured method of mining.

Kimberley was then, if not in the zenith of its prosperity, at any rate by far the most flourishing and wealthy community in South Africa. The completion of the trunk line to so important a centre was, therefore, regarded as a red letter event in the annals of Cape railway construction, and with right royal display the advent in due course of the iron horse among the diamonds was signalised. Music, electricity, pyrotechnics, and aught else that money could procure in the country, contributed to make the occasion a festive one, and on the night of the opening day, the Kimberley Mine, the centre of attraction, presented a fairylike appearance, in happy keeping with the principal industry concerned ; diamond devices, showers of fireworks, and myriads of twinkling lights illuminated the great mine as though with flashing gems, and the effect was brilliantly beautiful viewed from the brink, where a promenade was devised and military music provided for the spectators.

Upon completion and opening of the railway to Kimberley, I returned once more to Cape Town.

A month or two afterwards, the newly discovered, or rather resuscitated, gold fields of the Transvaal, commenced to attract public attention with renewed vigour. Frequent and increasingly favourable news continued

to percolate down country relative to wonderful finds in the De Kaap district, and other more or less remote parts in the north-east of the Transvaal.

As the opportunity presented itself, and many of my friends, with characteristic sanguineness and prophetic instinct, assured me that the mineral resources of South Africa were within measurable distance of becoming the marvel of the world, I resolved to go northward, and see for myself the New Eldorado.

I fixed on the then rising mining camp of Barberton as my objective point.

In preference to the alternative coastal routes via Natal or Delagoa Bay, I decided to go overland via the Diamond Fields and Pretoria. The latter, if anything, was the shorter route, but even this meant a railway trip of 647 miles to Kimberley, and a further 560 miles, or thereabouts, by waggon through the Transvaal, altogether a journey upwards of twelve hundred miles.

Fortified with the affectionate assurances of some of my friends, who exhibited unmistakable symptoms of "gold-fever" in its incipient stages, that if I found things all right they might follow me up country, I started upon my pilgrimage to "Tom Tidler's ground."

I had a letter or two of introduction to Dutch magnates in the Transvaal whom I never found, and an honorary commission from two newspapers to furnish them periodically with a true and faithful

account of my travels—a magnificent compliment which I, of course, accepted; so I was lavishly provided for in the matter of credentials.

Altogether, one way and another, it was very touching, the interest manifested in my departure; and I felt that a great deal depended upon me—in fact, they, my friends and the newspaper people, all said so, and I came to regard myself as a sort of special commissioner deputed to inquire into the *bonâ fides* of the new gold fields, only I retained the sole right and dignity of paying my own expenses.

At Kimberley I was vexatiously delayed for nearly a month. Two or three causes contributed to this delay, chief amongst them being my inability to obtain the means of proceeding, as I wished to, by ox-waggon. With ample time at my disposal, and a desire to see something of the new country I was to pass through, I had elected to go by a "Dutch Express," but found some difficulty in meeting with others equally agreeable to adopt this mode of travelling. At last, however, I succeeded, and engaged a seat on a covered buck waggon belonging to two young Cape Dutchmen, who were themselves journeying to the gold fields in search of fortune, and anxious to minimise their expenses by taking a small complement of passengers.

All aboard the waggon, which resembled, more than anything else, an enormous rabbit hutch, mounted on wheels, without springs, and drawn by a team of

eighteen oxen, we made a party of six as diversely constituted souls as were ever thrown together on an overland journey of some five hundred and odd miles, and which was destined to take us a month and a-half to accomplish.

These six souls were represented in the persons of four Dutchmen and two Englishmen, or rather an Englishman and a-half. I put myself down modestly as the whole Englishman—not with any desire to disparage the remaining half, because he turned out in every way, according to his lights, a decent sort; but I mean to infer that he was a Natal-born Britisher (a Banana Skin), speaking Dutch and Zulu with even greater fluency than his mother tongue, so that I looked upon him as a kind of compromise between the Dutchmen and myself.

Old Bananas, who had been on the Diamond Fields for many years, had, like many others there, made and lost a fortune, and was now going to try his luck at gold-mining. He was as straight as a die, and did not object to wash himself, so I voted him the pick of the bunch, and for sanitary reasons invited him to sleep next to me from the first night out.

Of the four Dutchmen, two were cousins, and joint owners of the waggon and oxen.

One of these, the teamster, was a fine, intelligent fellow, and had trekked South Africa from end to end as a transport rider, spoke English well, and was blessed with the physique of a giant.

His cousin was a somewhat indifferent specimen of his race; rather too swarthy, and without either the sincerity or the muscle of his relative.

The third Dutchman\* was a short, lean, mean, cadaverous, nasal-twanging, loud-talking ignoramus, and gave it out that he was only going to the gold fields as a sort of sympathetic (dry-nurse) companion to the individual who completed the quartette of Dutchmen. This individual, the Nurse's infant as it were, was worth half-a-dozen of him, and, but for his consummate good nature would, and could, being about six feet three in his boots (he didn't wear socks), have put Nurse across his knee and smacked him.

Like old Bananas, this flank man of the quartette, the Infant, had been engaged in the diamond mines for several years. He was, as I have intimated, a good-natured, honest fellow enough, but he rather inclined to look upon personal cleanliness and refinement as unnecessary adjuncts of civilised life—such as it is on a journey by ox-waggon—and in various ways was occasionally given to making a beast of himself, as I did not omit to tell him at times, with an expressiveness but inelegance of language which I could not for the life of me resist, but which also, be it said, the Infant took in good part, and even showed signs of being greatly edified thereat.

Such were my travelling companions.

But stay! I had almost forgotten to include a really important member, who brought the number of



our party up to seven. I refer to a black, woolly-pated, solemn-toned, odorous little oddity who hailed from the Mozambique Coast, and revelled in the name of Porridge, a titular dignity probably bestowed upon him by an admiring Scot.

Porridge was indeed a most valuable and indispensable personage.

Nominally, he was a "voor-looper"—that is to say, it was his duty, when it became necessary to exercise more than usual care in navigating the waggon, to walk in front of the leading oxen, and guide them by tugging at a short rein attached to their horns for the purpose.

But in reality Porridge was his baas's (the teamster's) chief factotum, and was more frequently called upon to take charge of the inspanning, outspanning, grazing, and bullock-whopping arrangements, and incidentally to hunt after a strayed ox, gather fuel, carry water, or kindle a fire—in fact, he was head groom, chief slogger, second cook, and first bottle-washer to the caravan.

We were not long in making a start when once the party was formed. The first few days of shaking down in that buck waggon I shall never forget; it is pigeon-holed in my memory alongside the time I had teething convulsions and took to the bottle. Recent railway experiences had fortunately case-hardened me a bit, or I should have faded clean away in this new riot.

I was prepared for a fairly rough time of it, but for sheer soul-sickening discomfort this waggon-travelling business took the kettle. There were minor domestic sufferings I let pass, more or less (I have gone through worse many a time since); the full flavour of the treat came out in the sleeping arrangements.

On account of the frizzling heat during the day, we invariably covered a stage in the night, in order to spare the oxen. This was discomfort number one, for it meant turning in on the waggon while it laboured along over boulders, plunged through ruts, or waded through sand drifts that half choked one; there were no proper roads, only beaten tracks, and the waggon had no springs, be it remembered.

Discomfort number two was the accommodation on the waggon itself. The arrangement of the baggage and other gear necessitated four sleeping abreast in the fore end and two in the rear part, the seventh member of the party being on duty in charge of the caravan. I was one of the four in front, the other three being old Bananas, Nursey, and the Infant.

The tarpaulin provided for covering the body of the waggon from end to end, tent fashion, was reefed back until bad weather required it otherwise. I took advantage of this, for hygienic reasons, to select an outside berth on the loading rails over the wheels. The hygienic benefit may have been all there in one way—I could hang overboard and suck in fresh air

*ad lib.*; but this advantage was seriously discounted by the insecurity of the perch. I had to roost about five feet from the ground on a sort of shutter grating, about two feet wide, and with no weather rails; and as my outfitter had omitted to send forward bedroom fixings I was without a square inch of padding to lie on, except the skin blanket I rolled myself into. It was a kind of sifting process one had to get accustomed to—the waggon being the sieve, yourself the cinders, and the road the ashpit. When the track was anyway below sample it was one continuous struggle to prevent yourself from bounding out of the sieve—that is, the waggon. You jerked, bobbed, jolted, and generally wandered around in such an idiotic and aimless manner, that eventually it would dawn upon you that to climb down, or submit to be shot off, and crawl alongside, was about the most merciful and benign act you could treat yourself to.

The menagerie travelled at the rate of fully three miles an hour when the cattle were anyway frisky; it was a killing pace, but I managed to keep up alongside when the waggon had the jumps badly, and I reckon in consequence that I trudged a good two-thirds of the journey.

The second night of trekking I forgot myself, and went to sleep when I turned in on my perch. The result might have been disastrous to me but for my thoughtfulness in looking after the comfort of old Bananas, who lay next me, by inducing him to roll

one lap of my skin blanket round himself, and tucking myself, sausage-roll style, into what remained over after my hospitality.

It was a glorious night—rather warm, but with a balminess in the air which intoxicated the senses, and lulled to rest all fears for the future before us in the distant Eldorado, whither we were wending our way in search of fame and fortune.

We were passing through a sand-drift; consequently our progress was slow and noiseless, save for the low grinding sound of the wheels in the sand, or the occasional pistol-like report of the teamster's whip. Everything seemed surpassingly tranquil and peaceful as we lay contemplating the beautiful canopy of heaven, with its myriads of stars and rich flood of silvery moonlight. Our hearts were too full even to break the spell by giving utterance to our thoughts.

But it was all a ghastly delusion.

We were not used to the business yet. There were plenty of nights like that in store for us to get wound up over.

The Infant was the first to tire of sentimental stargazing, and, in lopping over, spilled the ashes from his pipe into Nursey's open mouth, to that party's intense delight and satisfaction. This pipe-sucking after turning in, proved, by the bye, to be one of the Infant's little weaknesses, and, together with an inherent objection to disrobe, even to the extent of

the barges he called his boots, and a vast capacity for snoring like a fog-horn, rendered him a dainty sleeping companion for Nursey and old Bananas, between whom he was located.

One by one we followed the Infant into the realm of dreams. Windsor Castle had just been handed over to me by her Majesty as a slight token of her personal regard ; Bert and the Archbishop had jointly floated a music-hall concern, and made me a wealthy man with a few founders' shares—one for every twenty ordinary ; and I was about to put in a quiet half-hour down at my new place at Windsor, when the whole show seemed to shoot suddenly overboard, shares, castle, and all, and I thought for the nonce that I was floating away skywards after them. But it was not much of a dream so far as the floating item was concerned. We had passed out of the sand-drift, and the waggon wheels on Nursey's side had snicked over a boulder as big as a cottage, and on mine had dropped into a colliery, or some other little unevenness in the road. The result was that I disappeared overboard, and the other three were piled up on top of each other, struggling amid a *débris* of comestibles and hardware.

"Thunder ! where are you coming to you boobled acrobat. Take your big carcass off my head ; do you take me for an air cushion ?" came in muffled tones from old Bananas, across whose face the Infant was deposited.

"When off my chest this bag of meal I can take, and your arm you walk out of my eye, I'll you try and oblige," groaned the Infant.

"Alle crachter! I did tink the vorld vas to an end kom. Ach teer! where is my poots and my plankets?" twanged Nursey.

The two cousins in the rear were safely held in by the tarpaulin frame, and were, moreover, used to such trivial inconveniences.

I had been heaved over the side of the waggon, and lay suspended in the folds of my blanket, the weight of old Bananas' body effectively pinning the remainder of the blanket to the waggon.

By the grace of Providence and the help of Porridge, I was hauled safely into position again, after a short interval of material and mental suspense.

From that night forward I arranged matters differently. I told the other three fellows mostly concerned, that it distressed me more than I could tell to think their lives might be imperilled by a recurrence of such incidents, and suggested that at night we should all rope ourselves together Alpineer fashion. They consented, and for the rest of the journey nothing untoward happened.

I also found a means to lessen the jarring of the springless waggon, by lying on a couple of sacks placed end to end and stuffed with dry grass; but I was not quite successful at first in obtaining the right kind of grass for the purpose. For three days, whenever we

outspanned, I spent an hour or two on my knees in the blazing sun sawing off grass with a pair of nail scissors. Never until then had I appreciated the quantity of hay there is in an ordinary hayrick. I think it took about a hayrick and a-half to blow out those two miserable-looking little sacks. It may have been more, but I prefer to be within the mark. They swallowed all the stuffing I could rip, saw, and tear up in those three days, and then asked for more like Oliver Twist did for pudding. And then—oh, joy!—when at last the sacks presented a respectable rotundity, and could not get any more down without fear of accident, it was discovered that I had harvested a few cartloads of “black jack” grass, that harpooned around, crawled through blankets and clothes, and jabbed into everybody with such ferocity that I was condemned to cast the whole hayrick and a-half away, and make another three days’ scrimmage for selected stuffing under the interested guidance of all the other members of the party.

As regards our culinary arrangements, there were three messes.

I joined the proprietors of the menagerie—the two cousins—thereby escaping much of the fagging after wood, water, etc., as the boy Porridge was generally requisitioned to do that for us by his “baas.”

Nurse and the Infant had a mess to themselves, in which all the talking was done by Nurse and the fagging by the Infant.

Old Bananas preferred to cater for himself; and as for Porridge, although of course he was principally provided for by his "baas," he found additional benefit and unction in surreptitiously licking out the pots all round.

It took about a week to settle down to the pleasant routine and comfort of the thing, and by that time we had travelled through the short stretch of sandy waste lying between Kimberley and the Vaal River, and had crossed over into the territory of the South African Republic, better known as the Transvaal.



## CHAPTER XII.

FIRST LESSONS IN DOMESTIC ECONOMY—I TAKE IN WASHING ;  
IT TAKES IN ME—" THO' LOST TO SIGHT, TO MEMORY DEAR "—  
A BARBER-OUS AFFAIR —POTCHEFSTROOM— WE SMILE AT A  
CAMERA — WE PICK UP AN OUTCAST — HIS HISTORY —  
PRETORIA — WITH AND WITHOUT JOHN BULL — ELANDS  
VALLEY—A DISTURBED REVERIE—ROUGH TRAVELLING—THE  
DEVIL'S OFFICE—ALLUVIAL DIGGING—BARBERTON AHoy!

KEEPING pretty close company, with the tortuous windings of the Vaal River, we reached Christiana, a small Dutch village which shared at one time with Freetown, a similar little place on the borders of the Orange Free State, the unenviable notoriety of harbouring the illicit diamond buying fraternity. Both villages, being within easy distance of the Kimberley diamond mines, were resorted to by these individuals on account of the right of asylum granted by the respective States, whose territory and protection they abused in the conduct of their nefarious traffic with such flagrancy that the nature of their business was almost an open secret. This condition of things, however, has now changed.

Very little of interest occurred to relieve the monotony of the journey until we arrived at Potchefstroom; to all intents and purposes, it might be said, we were at sea in a desert. It was an incessant round of inspanning, outspanning, and trekking. The desolateness of the country and the glaring heat of the daytime, made the nights doubly welcome with their refreshing coolness and darkening mantle.

We usually halted during the day in the vicinity of water, and for many miles the Vaal River afforded us this convenience.

For the first time in my life I was compelled to attend to many details of existence hitherto taken in hand for me by others, and consequently I had come to regard these matters with an amount of unconcern which appalled me when it became necessary to shift for myself.

Take, for instance, one's washing. The everyday sort of man tosses his soiled linen into a corner of his bedroom, and does not see or trouble further about it until he finds it ready placed for him to put on again, spick and span, a week or so afterwards. This, at any rate, had been my experience up to date.

A week after getting into that desert I had to commence taking in my own washing! Now, I never exhibited any great aptitude for laundry work, consequently my first attempt at the business did not appear so perfect a success as perhaps it might have been.

The first family washing-day came off whilst we were still skirting the banks of the Vaal, so we all betook ourselves, with our week's washing, down to the river, and selected as the scene for our operations a spot by the water's edge where large masses of smooth ironstone afforded natural platforms.

The Infant, I should mention, was rather disinclined to join us—said he had no washing, never washed, or something of that sort; but as I was bent upon having another 'prentice hand at the business besides myself, I put forth all the persuasive power I could command, and at last prevailed upon him to accompany us.

We commenced by having a bathe, in which even the Infant joined after a good deal of coaxing, and in course of dismantling himself was rewarded for his virtue by discovering under his visible ones a second pair of dittos, which he pathetically informed us he had regarded as lost for many years.

Our bathe finished, we set to on the laundry work—at least, all except the Infant and myself did. I wanted to see how to go about it, and, green with envy, I dabbled about awhile in a guileless sort of way in order to watch how the other fellows managed it.

All of them seemed to have been reared round wash-tubs, and very soon had a good second-hand show of cleansed sundries spread out to dry in the sun on the big hot boulders.

At last I thought I grasped the idea, and scrambling out of the water clapped my broad-brimmed smasher on my head, and squatted down in nature's garb on the coolest square foot of iron-stone I could find.

Cutting off a cube from a bar of best blue mottled, I grabbed one of my newest flannel shirts, soused it in the water, and then—dropped the soap into the river. I cut another piece, and had plastered half of it on to one sleeve of the garment when it met the same fate as the first piece.

In this way all my stock of soap had floated down stream before I had even manipulated one of the flannels to my satisfaction. I thought it time then to pass on to the rubbing and rinsing part of the business, but before two minutes were over I had brutally torn out all the buttons by the roots, ripped up one sleeve, and mutilated the tails beyond redemption; so finding the other fellows gone, I climbed into my clothes and returned to the waggon, leaving a wrecked and stiffened soap plaster behind me as a slight memento of the occasion.

Before making a second serious attempt at clothes washing I vowed to thoroughly practise on an old flour bag in a bucket.

Button sewing, clothes repairing, and hair-cutting, were all more or less harrassing in their way to pick up, especially hair-cutting.

It was mutually agreed between old Bananas and myself one day that we should cut each other's hair.

Bananas understood how to go about it, and turned me off almost as well as Truefitt's could have done. As I felt certain of making an entire success of his poll, I did not think it worth while to spoil the effect by mentioning to him that it was my trial essay at hair-cutting. It was quite touching to see the confidence the old boy had in me as he settled himself down on the inverted bucket, with his head sticking through a sack, while he gave me little final instructions as to the length he would like it behind, the way he usually parted, and other details likely to aid me in doing credit to us both.

I assaulted him first where there was most material to work upon, and snipped off his forelock as a preliminary. He said he thought I was taking off just a trifle too much, but I assured him forelocks had gone out of fashion a great deal of late, and in any case that they never suited big-headed men like himself. After that I skirmished round to the rear, and attempted to carve off the enemy there, but somehow I unfortunately managed to jab the business end of the scissors into the nape of my patient's neck, and, springing up with a fiendish yell, he capered about in his straight sack in a physically harmless state of ferocity for several minutes, making up for his inability to break



things by hurling most abominable personal remarks at me. When he had composed himself again the other fellows irritated me dreadfully, by standing round offering suggestions, and making thoughtless remarks. However, I persevered, and in less than an hour and a-half had old Bananas' head trimmed up like a pig's back, and only slightly damaged—little piece off the lobe of the left ear, slight incision of the right one, and, of course, the trifling incident at the back of the neck—nothing to speak of.

As I have said before, there was very little to relieve the monotony of the journey until Potchefstroom was reached; to be sure, we passed through two villages which have since had some vitality shaken into them, but at that time they were only just commencing to rouse themselves from a somnolent state. I refer to Bloemhof and Klerksdorp. The latter place at the present time, I believe, aspires to take second rank only to Johannesburg in Transvaal mining importance, but whether its aspirations are justified by results I leave others to judge.

It was an unspeakable delight to arrive at Potchefstroom, with its broad shady thoroughfares, babbling streams, and general appearance of fertility and freshness. Like all other towns in the country, however, after the British Retrocession in 1881, it had lapsed into a languid and inactive state. Its spacious streets and market squares were almost deserted, and in many places weed-grown; the scanty, lethargic

population only served to throw into greater prominence the utter listlessness which prevailed, and on all hands melancholy signs were evident of a departed prosperity.

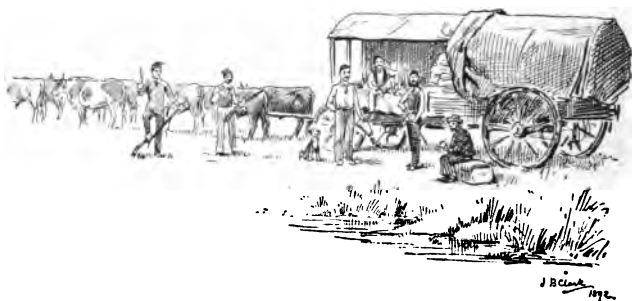
On the outskirts of the town could still be seen traces of the rudely-made forts hastily constructed during the Boer War, and near by, a modest stone enclosure marked the long last resting-place of a few brave fellows who fell during the unfortunate struggle.

Blessed with a bountiful water supply, the town is luxuriantly foliaged and deliciously cool, considering the nature of the surrounding country, and fruit is particularly plentiful. It was an oasis in the desert, and right thankful we all were to reach it; so, resolving to make a couple of days' halt, we selected for outspanning a convenient spot on the town commonage, sent the oxen off for a good graze, and started to perambulate Potchefstroom in search of its milk and honey.

During our walks abroad we fell in with an itinerant photographer, who had become stranded in the place, and, taking compassion on him, we decided to have ourselves photographed in a group round the waggon the same afternoon.

The man came along punctually, and we had all in readiness—oxen inspanned, one side of the tarpaulin rolled up, and attitude striking well in hand. All was still, peaceful, and perfect, until the misguided operator said something favourable about the weather

just as he was going to finally dive under his pall preparatory to taking the cap off the lens. From the time of starting, up to that moment we had been almost parched to death on the road for want of a little moisture in the atmosphere, but, although we could have put off pining for it then very well for another five minutes, the words were scarcely spoken when a miserable, cantankerous rain-cloud waltzed in front of the sun, and came down on us without mercy, pouring in torrents for two hours right off before there was a chance for the photographer to make another attempt to libel us. At length the weather showed signs of clearing, so we re-arranged ourselves, and when



Nurse and old Bananas (after dire threats) had kindly consented to stand aside, so that I might give tone to the picture by appearing in it, and the Infant had been requested by the operator to smile down to the capacity of the camera, the exposure was made, and the result declared satisfactory.



When anyone asks me why Nursesey posed with a piece of streaky pork in his hand, why the Infant and old Bananas wanted to look murderous with their guns, or why one of the cousins (the lesser one) should have roosted on the only piece of dry firewood we had left, I say I don't know; but when I am asked how the individual sitting on the box was able to assume such an easy grace, or how the party on the loading rail managed to make such a poem of his attitude, I am fain to answer with native modesty that the other cousin (the principal proprietor of the menagerie) and I are naturally graceful.

Leaving Potchefstroom for Pretoria, we passed almost over the site of the present mushroom gold city of Johannesburg, heedless and ignorant of the wealth that lay hidden under our feet, and only anxious to push on through the dreary country that surrounded us.

Somewhere at this stage of the journey we picked up one of those derelicts of humanity referred to in the opening pages of this book.

He was a species of chameleon, and turned blue at night, red-mottled in the daytime, and piebald when he was bilious.

We all struck against sharing the same blanket with him, and towels were well watched.

How he induced our proprietors to pick him up I could never rightly understand, as of course he was moneyless, besotted, and repulsive; but above all, was

a hundred per cent. better off where we found him, than it was ever likely he could be amidst the allurements and excitement of a new gold rush. But with the restless roving spirit of his kind, he begged permission to put his few miserable belongings on the waggon and accompany us.

He had ingratiated himself into the good books of a wayside storekeeper, and when we passed was making himself fairly useful by assisting to cut up Boer twist tobacco; and as it was almost an impossibility away in the wilderness like that to go wrong, the storekeeper was well content to keep him.

Poor fellow! I shall never forget him, although he is gone now.

Many a friendly chat I had with him over the camp fire beside the waggon, when the others, may-be, had turned in. At such times he was wont to unburden himself to me with a frankness that effectually smothered any tendency to be prejudiced against the man on account of his outward appearance and circumstances.

I well remember one night, when there was to be no trek, and the lads had gone skunk hunting, D. and myself were left to keep each other company over the glowing embers, and the talk drifted round to the folks at home in England.

D.'s back was to the waggon, and as he sat balancing himself on the edge of the small water-keg, gazing abstractedly into the fire, he made a weird

picture, with the lurid light playing across his bloated features, and the great, grim waggon-wheel behind throwing an uncanny-looking framework round him.

He was enveloped in an old police-cloak, the original buttons of which had been carefully replaced by others in a fruitless endeavour to conceal the identity of the garment. His legs were encased in a pair of dark yellow corduroy breeches, such as were served out to Sir Charles Warren's Bechuanaland force; the regulation "putties" or "gaiters," however, were missing, and in their place was drawn up, above the old ammunition boots he wore, a pair of very dubious-looking socks. His tunic, also, when exposed, bore witness to the fact that its wearer had done recent yeoman's service as a colonial volunteer.

"Well, D., what are you thinking about, eh?" said I, from across the fire to my companion, who seemed more than usually down in the mouth.

"Why, the confounded bad luck I've had of late, and the way my people at home have treated me."

"Never mind, old fellow, keep your pecker up; your luck may change soon, who knows?" I replied.

"Yes, yes, it is very good of you to talk like that, but I'm most sick-of trying. I'm going to the dogs as fast as the devil can take me, I know, so I care very little what becomes of me in the meantime. You have not heard the worst of my ups and downs—would you care to?"

"Yes, by all means, if you feel disposed to tell me."

"All right; it isn't a long yarn, and I'll try not to bore you. My father, then, is the head and best part owner of one of the principal English lines of ocean steamers. He is wealthy, has recently received a baronetcy, and is a popular man in society. I am his fourth son, and, after leaving Harrow, was destined for the Army, but got plucked; tried the Militia back door, rather over-ran the constable in the meantime, and appealed to my father for funds and an increased allowance. He said bluntly he would see me to Halifax first, and that if I could not square up with the Jews, and pay my way in Town on what I was getting (two hundred a year), I could stand the racket. As a result, I was dunned on all sides, and my life being made a misery to me, I confess I went a bit on the batter, violently spooned a ballet girl, and ran up some biggish card scores. It didn't last long, though. I soon received the option of clearing out with my allowance, or remaining in London without it."

"I chose to clear out, and, accordingly, sailed for the Cape, but had not been there six months before my gov'nor shut down remittances, because he heard that I had been on the spree once or twice. I didn't possess a red cent., knew nothing but school cram, and the rudiments of soldiering, and had no one at hand to go to, so was in a fix what to do."

“ All my people at home turned their backs on me as ‘ a bad egg.’ I had raised the wind on everything but what I stood up in, when Warren’s Bechuanaland Expedition was organised, so I joined Gough’s Horse as a trooper, and went up country with the expedition. When there was no more soldiering to be done, I got adrift in Kimberley, and after awhile went navvying on the railway ; but the drink laid hold of me, and I was taken to hospital with ‘ D. T.’s.’ Leaving hospital, I found shelter in a tin shanty in the kafir location, and lived and slept amongst Malays and niggers until they had finished making use of me at diamond priggings and gave me the kick out. Hearing of these Transvaal gold fields, I thought I’d try and tramp the few hundred miles to them, so started off, and, by begging and borrowing, had worked my way to that store, when you fellows came along ; and as I considered I had wiped off my obligation to the party by cutting up tobacco for him for three days, I was not going to miss the chance of a lift on the road ; so here I am, on my way to Heaven knows where, with no funds, no friends, and, I expect, a devilish short future.”

This was the burden of poor D.’s yarn, so far as I can remember. Often I have thought of him since, and the little cairn in a far away fever-stricken valley which marks the spot where it was my lot, but a few short months afterwards, to lay him low, with the

old police-cloak for his winding sheet and a neighbouring tree blaze for a headstone.

Arriving at Pretoria, we had in nineteen days accomplished somewhat more than half our journey.

Like Potchefstroom, we found the metropolis of the Republic a shady and well-planned township, but in a deserted and woe-begone condition. The seat of Government, where the doughty President Oom Paul smoked the pipe of peace, and took daily counsel with his compatriots, was a long squatty row of inferior whitewashed barrack rooms, situated up an out-of-the-way road that was a veritable slough of despond from recent heavy rains. When I waded round to view the premises, the only living thing in sight was a stray trek ox, peacefully browsing under the verandah, where the weeds had sprung up with prolific and uninterrupted verdancy.

The more enlightened Dutchmen whom we spoke to, did not attempt to conceal the fact that the country had pitifully retrograded after its evacuation by John Bull and his red-coats in 1881, and at the time I speak of, things had come to a dismal pass. Progress, energy, money, there was none; the country was in a forlorn state of apathetic bankruptcy, and in many districts the welcome chink of hard cash was never heard—a system of bartering had sprung up in its place.

Farmers were hopelessly in arrear with even their small annual Government quit rents, and store-

keepers were as vainly struggling to clear off the large stocks which had been thrown on their hands when a maternal British Government thought fit at one and the same time to scuttle out of the country, and their obligations to loyal subjects in it.

Bracing ourselves for the lesser, but more toilsome, half of our journey, we continued northwards after a day and a-half's stay in Pretoria, and crossing Bronkers Spruit—the scene of one of the most sanguinary and fatal engagements during the Boer War—we arrived in due course at Middleburg, a small, sleepy village situated on the high veldt or table land, which embraces a considerable portion of that part of the country.

This table land is perfectly barren of timber, and in passing over it we experienced much difficulty in obtaining water and fuel, being compelled for the latter to rely upon dry cattle manure, “mest,” in the collection of which, it being a scarce commodity, I fear much “envy, hatred, and malice” was occasioned for the time amongst sundry members of our party.

The country being very exposed, and the nights in consequence bitterly cold, it was a bleak look-out when the sun went down and the almost tropical heat of the day gave place to nipping night winds, unless a plentiful supply of this dreadful “mest” was forthcoming.

Our own photographers would not have known us if they had met us sneaking off on one of those disreputable “mest” hunts.

On account of our separate culinary arrangements, there were two fires to be kept up. Both sides religiously bribed Porridge on the quiet, to keep watch and report in the right quarter the proximity of a healthy supply of "mest," and whenever he passed the word round "Mest ahoy!" or "Mest ahead! on the larboard bow," etc., the amount of mean craftiness and terrible conspiracy that took place defies description, no matter what time of the day or night the wretched stuff would loom in sight. If it were daytime you would probably see poor D., with a hideously deformed chest, saunter off in a nonchalant manner, shortly followed by old Bananas in the last stages of acute corpulency—there were no sacks to be seen. If, say, on the other hand, it was whispered in the dead of night that there was a sudden acquisition of "mest" in our neighbourhood, then muffled figures might be seen dropping down from either side of the waggon, and gliding away into the darkness with a waggon lantern in one hand and an empty gunny bag in the other.

Very often the members of these nocturnal expeditions would return in the early morning without enough firing to burn a cobweb, much less cook the coffee.

A stage or two past Middleburg brought us at last within sight of the charmed region known as the De Kaap Gold Fields, or, at any rate, to the first series of volcanic upheavals which form the abnormally



rugged and mountainous country whither we had come so far in search of the precious metal.

The featureless plateau was left behind us, and in the grey dawn of a beautiful morning we found ourselves almost precipitously looking down on the lovely Elands Valley, as it lay in reposeful grandeur far away below us, with the night mists still creeping up the mountain slopes, and enveloping the tropical foliage here and there as with a gauzy veil.

Shortly the distant hills became tinged with gold, the vaporuous curtain lifted, and amidst the glories of an African sunrise there opened out at our feet one of the most soul-inspiring and rapturous panoramas of nature I had ever witnessed in my wanderings.

Hemmed in on either side by the grim rocky majesty of the mountains, the torrent, which wound its way through the gorge as far as the eye could reach, entered on its headlong flight for freedom below us on the right, and, dashing over crag and boulder, was soon threading its silvery way between the stunted trees and undergrowth which marked its course.

Presently the air became infused with warmth and sound, and the shrill notes of birds, the curious whistle of a fleeting bok, and the gay shouts of kafirs as they hailed each other away down in yonder mealie gardens, were wafted upward on the gentle breeze, and announced the advent of another day. See, there the—

"When you've quite finished hanging over that precipice, looking as tame as a sick monkey, perhaps you won't mind giving us a hand to make things ready for sliding down into yon valley?"

Thus rudely was my reverie broken in upon by old Bananas, who had been assisting to lash the goods and chattels on to the waggon with such energy, that he looked as though he were an immediate candidate for a fit of apoplexy.

"Why, certainly; but what do you want to make such a hulabaloo for about going down a bit of hill; it doesn't look bad," I answered, feeling rather put out at being disturbed whilst admiring the sublimities of nature.

"Just for the fun of the thing, of course," said my tormentor, with horrible sarcasm; "we shall glide down like a well-balanced sling truck in Kimberley mine, I daresay, only we shall have to do without a standing wire. It ain't at all bad, oh no!"

There was no help for it. I had to lend a hand in lashing up, tying down, and jamming in everything on that miserable waggon, until at last I spitefully inquired whether it would not be as well to try the road track down the mountain before rolling the show into the valley over the nearest precipice, as, I said, of course I concluded they were going to do, after such elaborate preparations.

Everything having been carefully stowed away, I had my revenge by asking, in an offhand manner, if

it would not be advisable to take a short spell for breakfast before the performance of throwing the waggon over commenced. To the accompaniment of a diabolical grin from Porridge, they all gasped out their surprise that they had not thought of such a thing before.

So there it was ; we had to drag half the caravan to pieces to get at the provender, etc., and the sun was high in the heavens before we had finished feeding and had made all taut again.

From that moment, until we arrived at Barberton, life was not worth living.

In comparison, our progress thus far had been a serenely pleasant one over a billiard table.

Looked at from a suicidal point of view, and after a lapse of time sufficient to make it safe to think about, there can be no doubt that our descent from the top of the Elands Berg into the Elands Valley was a highly exciting and interesting experiment.

Fortunately, we had in our teamster a man who knew what he was about, and, I believe, could have taken his waggon and oxen up or down the side of a house.

The wheels were skidded with chains, the brake screwed up as hard as it would go, and all the oxen detached but two, which were left yoked to the *disselboom* in order to guide as far as possible the enormous load behind them ; and in the swerving, bounding passage down, the poor brutes were thrust

helplessly forward and cruelly battered with the huge pole swinging to and fro between them.

We had to descend by a zig-zag track hewn out of the rocky mountain side, by the intrepid pioneers who had preceded us in the hunt for gold.

Having neither means nor inclination to remove aught but such of the looser boulders as blocked their way, there remained in the track great masses of solid rock, over which it was necessary to drop waggon and oxen holus-bolus.

To lessen the possibility of the waggon being precipitated into the valley beneath, we all had to tear and scramble alongside, hanging on to it with leather *riempjes*. Once the ponderous machine stood tottering in the air on the very brink of the precipice, but by main force we kept it from crashing down, and meeting the fate which befell many a waggon before and after us, until the existing so-called road was made.

Almost from start to finish, the descent was a succession of flying leaps, the heavy iron tyres, as they flew over the rocks, throwing out a fiery spray like a cutler's wheel.

At last, thanks to good luck and good management combined, we arrived safely in the valley shortly before sunset, dead beat after our exertions in a sweltering temperature.

Continuing our journey after spending a day in overhauling wheels, nuts, bolts, etc., we traversed

the Elands Valley for some thirty odd miles, until we came to a bend of the Godwaan's River, where the first real difficulty in climbing presented itself.

There was not much to choose between coming down hill and going up, the principal difference being that in the one instance it was a case of the fewer oxen the better, and in the other the more the merrier.

Being fortunate enough to fall in with a couple of Lydenburg transport riders journeying in the same direction, we kept company for some distance, and rendered mutual aid in overcoming the difficulties of the road, which were now indeed dreadful.

In one or two of the roughest parts we combined forces, and inspanned at times over thirty oxen to one waggon in order to drag it up the wall-like sides of the mountains.

Devil's Office is not a propitious name to meet with on arrival in a new and almost unknown country. But this is the literal translation of Duivels Kantoor, the first mining camp we came to, and the administrative centre of the North De Kaap Gold Fields, as Barberton is of the South De Kaap.

Situated on the very edge of a rocky krantz, reputed to be one of the highest points in the Transvaal, the Kantoor (as it is best known) commands a sweeping view of the De Kaap or Cape Valley, and in primeval times undoubtedly stood out

a forbidding headland in an inland sea, such as the encircling mountains and other indications suggest the valley to have once been.

The Kantoor when we arrived was exclusively the scene of alluvial digging, that is to say the winning of free or loose gold from auriferous loam, as distinguished from quartz reefing, of which I will speak later.

On account of its comparative simplicity and inexpensiveness, alluvial mining is often termed "poor man's digging," and the great Californian and Australian booms in the "fifties" were instances of poor men's rushes; but those countries have long since passed through the turbulent days of "cradles" and "sluice boxes," and with the introduction of capital, the more elaborate system of hydraulicing has been adopted.

Although alluvial digging is still modestly carried on in the De Kaap and adjacent districts, it can never be said that the country is capable of supporting a population of individual diggers.

South Africa generally, and the Transvaal in particular, is essentially a reefing country.

Until the existence of payable reefs was discovered, but scant attention was directed to the gold fields we had now arrived upon.

We, like the thousands of others who have since flooded the country, had come not to look for nuggets, but in search of reefs; therefore we did not tarry long on the Kantoor heights.

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A second edition of our Elands Berg experience dropped us into the De Kaap Valley, across which we had to do a final trek of thirty odd miles to Barberton.

At last, after a journey of over one thousand two hundred miles through South Africa, the land of gold was reached forty-six days from the time of leaving Kimberley.

## CHAPTER XIII.

BARBERTON—THE RESIDENCY—I INTERVIEW A GOLD COMMISSIONER AND MAKE PEACE OVERTURES—THE PROSPECT OF PROSPECTING—"HARRY THE REEFER"—EXCELSIOR CITY—A THUNDERSTORM—DEATH, DESERTION AND DESOLATION—A GRUESOME TASK.

AT the time of our arrival, the big rush, the avalanche of gold seekers, had not fairly set in; the third and latest great gold boom of the century was only just coming on.

Barberton consisted of a few wattle-and-daub, and galvanised iron shanties, a sprinkling of tents, and an abundance of hive-shaped grass huts—the whole snugly ensconced on the lower slopes of the mountains in the north-east angle of the valley.

For the headquarters of a big mining country the camp seemed very quiet.

A newly-appointed Gold Commissioner represented law and order, from the sale of prospecting licences to fixing it at "forty shillings or a month."

He was the only magnate whom I was able to find that I had a letter of introduction to—a nice, friendly sort of letter from a fellow Africander intimate of the Commissioner's. It set out with a certificate of my



respectability ; went on to hint that being a species of newspaper fiend I might just break the Fields once and for all unless I was encouraged to do the other thing ; and tapered off with a kindly suggestion to the effect that I could with safety be allowed to hang round in the vicinity of a gold mine or a family plate-chest without being watched.

It was a delicately veracious testimony to my worth, and I hastened to hand it in while it was warm.

I had some difficulty in finding the Residency, there being no City police and no telephone exchanges about. When I did find the seat of law and order, I was disappointed. Instead of something imposing, I came up with a corrugated iron Dutch oven arrangement about twenty feet square, perched on the side of the mountain in the rear of the camp. A flag handkerchief on a beanpole adorned one end of the structure, and a couple of blankets airing over a mimosa bush gave a finish to the other extremity ; while behind, further up the hillside, the open lappet of a bell tent (the camp jail) revealed a smug-looking party in blue pants locked into a pair of brand new stocks.

For simplicity of design the Residency was a model. The audience chamber, the mail office, the Gold Commissioner's department, the court of justice, and the private apartments, were all so contiguous that you could sit in any one of them and pass into another without the least effort ; you could just sit

still and do it, in fact. This was a feature in the architecture of an important public building which I have never seen excelled in any other place.

The Commissioner received me most affably, and the tenor of the letter I bore made a perceptible impression upon him.

He ushered me to a seat of honour on his stretcher bedstead in the audience chamber, recklessly regaled me with Squareface Hollands, and begged me not to stand back in my commands.

This was homely on his part, so I met him in the same spirit—(friendly spirit; not Squareface)—and opened out freely. Placing my position in a nutshell, I told him I had come up country at much expense and trouble, fully prepared to do justice to these new gold fields, and willing to let things slide on smoothly; adding that nothing short of an absolute refusal on his part to settle me down quietly with a payable gold mine would induce me to cut up rough and break things, or swerve anyway from my noble resolve. The actual alternative I had not the heart to tell him, even when he hung back at my offer, and finally tailed out altogether; excusing himself by saying that very few decent mines were handed over to him by the diggers to pay round as gratuities, and at that moment he could not lay his hands on one.

Of course, I scored this down as disgusting prevarication, and quite contrary to the purport of my letter of introduction.

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Nevertheless, I controlled myself. I kept calm, and told the Commissioner if he would give me a few hints how to go about it, and hand me over a ten shilling prospecting license, I would fossick round for a mine on my own account, and be independent; but if I failed to raise a good prospect, he and the fields would have to stand any damage resulting as best they could—I would not be responsible, anyhow. He trembled visibly when I threw off liability in this way, but said he must do his best to get the risk underwritten.

As a promising line of country for gold reefs, he recommended a north-easterly direction slightly inclining south over the mountains, and, as a more minute instruction, told me to pass up the first gorge to the right, slide down the mountain into the gully on the other side, cross the creek, and bend away in a north-westerly direction towards the Crocodile River, leaving the Zambesi on my right to the north-east. When I came across anything that took my fancy, I could “peg out” and pass him down word, and if the locality was south of the Equator, and in his province, he would grant me claim licences.

This might have been as clear as crystal to any other man, but somehow I failed to get the hang of the route accurately, and thought it injudicious, under the circumstances, to undertake the tour alone; but as I meant business, I took up a prospecting license

as a start in, and told the Commissioner I would weigh through the rest of the evidence.

When I came to ponder over the business I began to feel a shade embarrassed. It dawned upon me that I had a big contract on hand, and no very fixed idea how to go about it.

I found I had not brought enough pocket-money along to buy out a rat-catcher, unless I broke into the price of a retreat down country in case things went altogether mouldy with me. This effectually stifled any notion I might otherwise have entertained of buying up, even at a sacrifice, any sound-going concern in the gold mining line. The only plan open to me, was to prospect for a property of my own. This I determined to do. All I wanted was an old prospector to join me, as the prospecting instincts I had displayed in my boyhood were never allowed to develop, being blighted in the bud when I was caught hooking up the lawn turf with a potato-hoe after bait worms.

While I was looking round, and trying to find a suitable party to join me, I fell in with a hearty and original character who had spent the best part of his days knocking about in gold countries.

"Ef yez hev a mind to go prospectin' an' kar to bide along o' me in yon mountains till yez fit out, mayhap I kin larn yez a handy tip or tu. I've bin sinkin' on a prospect awhile now, an' I'm 'bout down on bedrock for ready yaller; but tick's right at store a bit, and durn me yez ar welcome to pot luck an' a doss."

With a slight modification of the terms so far as the "ready yaller" was concerned, I decided to enter upon a practical course of study, concerning gold reefing, under the old fellow's tuition.

We, that is Harry the Reefer (to give my tutor his full digger's title), two niggers, three pack donkeys, and myself, left Barberton next morning.

As Harry said, his camp (Excelsior City) was pitched in yon mountains, and it took us nearly three days to climb and scramble there.

It was a wild, lonely spot, grandly situated high up at the head of a great gorge, and away on every hand stretched a billowy sea of mountainous country—bare and forbidding enough on the serrated rocky summits and bold escarpments, but luxuriantly clothed with tropical undergrowth in the maze of intersecting valleys and ravines.

Excelsior City consisted of two circular grass huts, an old prospecting tent, and an antheap oven, the whole being erected on level "cut-outs," or ledges made in the mountain side, to prevent them from sliding into the valley below. One of the huts in the west end of the city was allotted to me, the niggers were quartered in the other hut in the slums in the east end, and Harry saw fair play from the canvas Mansion House just above us.

Picture a beehive-shaped framework of wattles, about six feet in diameter and same in height, deposited flat on the ground, loosely thatched all over with grass,

and an aperture to crawl through, with a small thatched hurdle to close at night, and a pretty fair idea may be obtained of an African grass hut, such as that handed over to me unfurnished, rent free, on a repairing lease, for an indefinite period.

On and off for the greater part of a year I sniffed the fresh mountain breezes of Excelsior City, free from the trammels of an over civilised world, and unburdened with the exactions of modern Society.

The events that were crowded into that one short year were nevertheless of a curious and diversified character so far as I was concerned, and the contemplation of many of the scenes and incidents that occurred will ever call to my mind memories of a strange chapter in my life, a chapter partaking of romance rather than of hard actual experience.

During the three months that the healthy or dry season continued, everything went on merrily. True, a staple diet of mealy pap and wild bush tea rather pulled me down, until I acquired a due capacity for expansion, and could hold out longer than a quarter of an hour between meals, and leave the cooking utensils behind when I went for a stroll. But this was a mere passing discomfort, and was compensated for by the appreciation of solids which it engendered. For the rest, I discovered, in submitting myself to a drastically practical course of elementary mining and geology, that there may be, as the poets say, an infinite amount of dignity in labour; but likewise, there is also a

considerable deal of commonplace hard work that draws all the dignity out of a man in about five minutes, when it takes the form of scientific navvying under a tropical sun.

It was when the heavy rains set in, that I commenced to thoroughly enjoy myself.

Hot weather and fever season are synonymous terms in those parts of South Africa, and both are accompanied throughout the five or six months they last, from about October to March, by a succession of terrific thunderstorms which are said to be unequalled the wide world over in their awe-inspiring violence.

The enormous masses of ironstone, and the generally metalliferous character of the rocks, has given the mountainous north-east portion of the Transvaal the reputation of being a veritable loadstone, whereon the elements wreak their vengeance.

The initial test I was subjected to was unusually severe, and perhaps accounts to some extent for the ungrudging respect I have ever since entertained for those awful blasts of nature; yet I aver that no man, I care not whom he may be, can pass through one of them without experiencing a mingled feeling of dread and admiration, let alone of thankfulness, when the ordeal is over.

Harry was away when the first tempest of the season vented its fatal fury over our little camp. I had myself been absent on a prospecting potter in the

adjacent mountains since early morning, and upon my return to camp in the evening, after having partaken of a vespertine fill of pap and green tea, had squatted down on some sacks outside the hut to enjoy a pipe before turning in. The weather was oppressively hot, and an hour or two after the brief twilight had deepened into darkness, there were not wanting signs of an approaching storm. There was a muggy stillness in the electrically surcharged atmosphere that created an indescribable feeling of nervous restlessness, which the two boys whom Harry had left behind with me appeared to share in, as they lingered over the dying embers of the camp fire near by.

Although not as apprehensive as I should have been had I possessed the experience I was yet to gain, I still regarded the prospect of a storm far from complacently; for, of course, I had heard something of Transvaal rainy seasons with their attendant thunderstorms, and was also aware that if the elements paid out their anger anywhere in my locality I could not possibly be circumstanced much worse.

Excelsior City, physically, was about as near the heavens as it could get in that particular part of the country, and in addition to a superabundance of ironstone in the vicinity, there was a prolific crop of heavy steel drills, and other mining implements, necessarily lying about outside and inside the huts, to say nothing of a quantity of dynamite and detonators sufficient to blow up an ironclad, which were

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deposited for safety's sake, during Harry's absence, under my sleeping stretcher.

Fagged though I was, it is scarcely to be wondered at, therefore, that I did not feel any keen anxiety to seek my virtuous couch—on top of that dynamite—and as ominous flashes of distant lightning commenced to illumine the skies, I concluded it would be more satisfactory to wait around and see things through.

The darkness grew intense, and as the tempest drifted slowly but surely down upon us, startling flashes of forked lightning, followed by crashing peals of thunder, succeeded each other with extraordinary rapidity. Soon it became only too apparent that the elevation of our camp would actually bring it into the very midst of the thunder-clouds, for, as the lightning was almost incessant, great cloud banks could be seen curling over the adjacent mountain ridges.

Within a few minutes, the war of the elements was raging round us, the rain poured down in a perfect deluge, and the thunder and lightning became appalling. The boys and myself had retreated into our respective huts, but I quickly discovered that mine at least afforded scant protection, as the loose dry grass with which it was thatched required a drenching or two to render it weather proof; and as it was, it let the water pour through in such a merciless manner that soon every stick and stitch I possessed was in a dripping state.

Thinking to gain shelter in Harry's tent, I made a dash towards it, but to my dismay found that omission to loosen the shrunken guy ropes had caused the pegs to draw, and the tent had collapsed over the unoccupied stretcher within, like a white pall covering a bier. Wet to the skin, I elected to remain where I was, in the open ; indeed, there was very little option left me, for the natives' hut was, doubtless, no better than my own, notwithstanding that they remained in it. The awful fury of the storm, too, as it spent its full force on the camp, well nigh held me spellbound, feeling as I did that each moment might be my last.

The blinding vividness of the lightning as it went to earth in every direction near me with a sickening hiss, and the deafening roar of the thunder-claps which simultaneously accompanied it, were terrifying. The very rocks appeared to be seething under the awful downpour of fire and water.

Five minutes had perhaps passed since the tempest had reached its height, and as flash succeeded flash, turning night into day with a hideous brilliancy, I stood gazing down in the direction of the great cloud-hidden gorge below, listening to the thunder crashing with reverberating report along its course, and echoing in the neighbouring valleys.

Suddenly it seemed as though I had become enveloped in a blue-white flame, and with the sound of a terrific crash ringing in my ears I was felled to the ground.

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When I recovered from what had evidently been a brief period of unconsciousness, I found that the storm had passed over ; but the night was still fearfully dark, and the oppressive heat had given place to a damp chilliness. A few yards below me, a large ring, the smouldering remains of a fire, glowed weirdly amid the surrounding gloom like a mystic fairy circle. Collecting my scattered senses, I quickly conjectured that one or other of the huts had been struck by lightning and burnt down. As I groped my way towards the spot down the slippery mountain side I shouted to the boys, but received no response. Presently, as I approached the fire, my feet stumbled with a dull thud against something, and stooping down my hands came in contact with the clammy, half-warm flesh of a human body.

Life was extinct ; of this I satisfied myself by touch and sound. The hut burnt was the boys', but my own had also disappeared, and in place of it, where it had stood, was a shallow, jagged hole, into which I fell headlong as I continued groping about in the pitchy darkness endeavouring to ascertain the extent of the catastrophe that had befallen our little settlement.

Finding that I could do nothing until daylight came to my assistance, I resigned myself to wait out the few remaining hours of darkness. And what hours they were ! How they dragged wearily along as I sat or stood about, soaked to the very skin,

on that chill mountain side, waiting for the first signs of daybreak ! How the wretched lonesomeness of the situation bore in upon me as I contemplated the death and destruction that had been meted out around me ! The same withering grasp of death that had passed me by unscathed had hurried another away into the unknown, leaving me alone to meditate upon the grace of my preservation. Save the corpse at my elbow, no human being, so far as I knew, was within many miles of where I stood, and the deep, silent calm, that the tempest had left in its wake, was only broken now and again by the startling night sounds of a wild country, the dismal howl of a jackal, or the peculiar bay of some strange animal as it prowled in one of the valleys below.

At length the canopy of night lifted, enabling me to survey my surroundings and the nature and extent of the disaster. My own hut, with everything in it, had clearly been struck by the lightning, and blown to atoms by the explosion of the dynamite and detonators—the distinctive downward force of dynamite being indicated by the large hole which alone remained to mark the spot where, a few hours before, I had sought shelter from the storm.

Shreds and splinters were strewn over a considerable area, up and down the mountain side, and my own escape, with merely a concussive shock—as I stood only some twenty yards away, near Harry's tent—was little less than miraculous.

An ugly wound on the native's head had been fatal to him, he having been hurled to earth by the explosion, or struck by the scattering débris, which at the same time had consummated its destructive flight by setting fire to the second hut.

What became of the other boy I never discovered, but as I could find no trace of him I surmised that, finding his companion dead, and evidently concluding that I also was dead—seeing that I remained silent and unconscious after the catastrophe—fright and superstition overcame him, with the result that he cleared away into the mountains. I was strengthened in this opinion by knowing how abhorrent the presence of death is to the native mind, and how difficult it often is to get the boys even to bury their own dead, still less remain alone near the spot where a corpse lies.

Having thus satisfied myself as to the cause and effect of the misfortune that had overtaken us, I was confronted with the gruesome task of burying the poor fellow, whose body lay where it had fallen—a victim, indirectly, to the fury of the elements. For the instant I felt that I must turn away from the scene, but as quickly recovering myself I faced the inevitable.

The rocky and precipitous position of the demolished camp placed me in some quandary as to the burial, for without the aid of explosives, the idea of forming a grave anywhere near was scarcely

to be thought of; and to remove the body into the valley below was a herculean task which I felt to be quite beyond me. Suddenly it suggested itself to me to utilise the gap made by the explosion. This I did, and by removing such of the rubble as remained in the hole, I had soon provided a last resting-place for him to whom the spot had been of such fatal significance.

Then, procuring a blanket from Harry's tent, I enshrouded the body in it, and half carrying, half dragging my ghastly burden, I conveyed it along the mountain side, and as the sun was rising with golden glory committed it to earth with such reverence as I could command.

## CHAPTER XIV.

FEVER ON THE FIELDS—DEATH OF HARRY—NEWS FROM BERT  
—HE IS STRICKEN WITH GOLD FEVER—EXCELSIOR CITY  
REDIVIVUS—I STUDY ZULU ON THE KINDERGARTEN SYSTEM  
—ARRIVAL OF BERT—HIS RECONTRE—THE FOX AND GEESE  
OF SUNDAYS RIVER—ALAS, MAJUBA!—A COLLAPSE—"RIDE  
AND TIE," AND HOW IT WORKED—SO FAR SO WELL, EXCEPT  
IN PLACES.

A WEEK later found me back in Barberton. Without shelter or food, and almost clothesless, I had been compelled to quit Excelsior City for awhile. Besides, it was necessary that I should acquaint Harry with the state of affairs, so that means might be adopted without delay to re-establish the camp, or remove what little of it the dynamite explosion had left behind. To this end I sought my recent companion in vain for nigh a couple of days, but at last succeeded in discovering him in the wretched mud shanty then serving as the Barberton hospital. He had contracted fever—the malarial fever—which, alas! proved so fatal, not only to him but to many others, during the next few months that the rains lasted.

The country had not then been subjected to the purifying process of systematic grass burning, for prospecting purposes, which has since done so much to minimise the deadly effects of the malaria arising in the valleys and plains from the soddening of the decayed vegetation of ages.

From all parts of the surrounding low country, prospectors were being brought into Barberton almost daily—such, at least, as did not die or suffer unheard of, or could bear the rackings of conveyance for many miles under a blazing sun on extemporised stretchers, made of a couple of sacks with poles thrust through them, and carried on the shoulders of jolting, jabbering natives.

Although bad enough in reality, exaggerated accounts of the ravages of fever at De Kaap reached the Cape, Natal, etc., with the result that the stream of fortune seekers which had commenced to flow up country to the new gold fields, received a severe check, and some six or nine months elapsed ere it again set in with vigour.

A few days after I found Harry in hospital, his life flickered away.

It was about a couple of days before he died, that the weekly mail from Natal brought me a missive from Bert which surprised as much as edified me.

Previous to my departure from Cape Town, and subsequent arrival on the Fields, I had written, advising him of my movements—in my later epistles



expatiating somewhat upon the allurements of gold mining as a pursuit. This possibly injudicious proceeding of mine, added to the general state of gold craze the country was in, could have but one effect upon such an ambitious nature as Bert's. His "chit" (it was nothing more) acquainted me with the fact that he intended making his *début* in the mining world as soon as mules, horses, or oxen could transport him to Barberton.

When I say that I was surprised and edified, I should add the qualifying statement that I was considerably alarmed also, at the prospect of his arrival at such an inopportune moment. With the exception of a few traps and fewer sovereigns, which I had fortunately left in safe keeping in Barberton, I was now almost as flat down on Fortune's bedrock as poor D., the Chameleon was when we picked him up on the road, and who, by the bye, had fallen one of the first victims of the season to fever in a valley not far from Excelsior City, where I nursed, and eventually helped to bury him alongside the wretched grass hut in which he had sought the boon companionship of a besotted Belgian miner. Under the circumstances, I felt it difficult to contemplate calmly the advent of my friend, considering, as I did, that his fond ideal of a gold-digger's life (in which, as a new chum, he would be sure to anticipate hunking up a nugget as big as his head a week after looking for it), was likely to

be rudely shattered at my hands if he put in an appearance while I, like Micawber of old, was still hanging round for "something to turn up."

Nevertheless, there was balm of peace for me in the soothing reflection that Bert was likely to bring some succouring specie along with him; and, looked at in this golden light, his coming seemed even bearable.

After Harry's unfortunate death, I decided to return at once to Excelsior City; for, although there was the probability of experiencing the violence of more storms, I determined that dynamite should not have the opportunity of taking part in the next fandango, as I would see that it had a wider berth in future. In any case, the hills were certainly more healthy, in my opinion, and infinitely more preferable, than the valleys, where the risk of contracting fever was considerable.

The claims Harry had prospected so long were now at my disposal, and these, I argued, Bert and myself might continue to work until the return of the healthy season, when we could set out prospecting in earnest in the low country toward the Crocodile River.

Having left information in Barberton for Bert concerning my whereabouts, and engaged a sturdy Zulu boy to carry provisions, etc., I started off once more for the mountains.

During the fortnight of my absence, not a creature, apparently, had visited the hillside camp. The old

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digger's tent, of which I now took possession, remained as I had left it, in a pall-like state of collapse, and the débris of the fires and explosion was still lying scattered about.

Not caring to occupy a spot where lay buried by my own hands, a victim of an unpleasant experience, I selected a similar, but more suitable, camping ground on a neighbouring ridge. Here I pitched my tent, and my boy Salt having built a couple of roomy grass huts, Excelsior City in a week's time had risen, phoenix-like, from its ashes.

Then, for nearly a month, whilst I patiently awaited Bert's arrival, I led a sort of Robinson Crusoe life, with the faithful Salt as my man Friday.

The interval passed quickly. I occupied much of the time in the study of the Zulu language, which I found it was absolutely necessary I should master now, if I wished to avoid bloodshed; for, as Salt and myself were as sublimely ignorant of each other's vernacular as we were of the political views of the chattering baboons that swarmed in our vicinity, the relations between us became painfully strained at times.

Zulu, as spoken by the natives, is melodious—it is even poetical; moreover, allowing for certain dialectical corruptions, it is understood by most of the great South-east African tribes. With the true instinct of one who is melodious, poetical, and given to research, I therefore abandoned myself to revel in its mysteries under Salt's guidance.

We adopted a kind of modified kindergarten system of my own. For instance, if I told Salt to bring me a spoon, and he brought me a shovel instead (which ten to one he would), I threw the shovel at him, and said "Spoon!" in my most impressive manner. This (after I had hunted up the article myself) would invariably cause Salt to go to pieces on a smile, and let loose the Zulu equivalent for "spoon." In this way, in a very short time, I acquired a remarkable knowledge of the language, which I propose to give to the world at some future date, in the form of a treatise on "The Zulu Language; In Its Relation to Sanscrit," by "One Who Knows." Salt also made rapid strides with English, and in a week or two was a striking example of the advantages of my system over any other.

Searching after the three donkeys which Harry had allowed to stray away grazing some time before, shepherding the gold claims be-  
queathed me, baking, cooking, and shooting, all contributed to keep me amply employed pending Bert's arrival.

At last, late one afternoon, as I sat languidly watching the sun setting like a ball of fire behind the neighbouring hills, I was suddenly startled out of my reverie by the sight of a familiar outline, growing as



though a living silhouette above the horizon, in the very heart, as it seemed, of the waning orb of day. Even at that distance I could swear to Bert's athletic proportions, and above all to the replica of the Albert Hall roof poised jauntily on his head.

Followed by a Swazi lad bearing his impedimenta, Bert wended his way down the mountain path to Excelsior City, where he arrived almost before I had grace to marshal my camp-following in his honour.

As we clasped hands, a *feu-de-joie* of three dynamite cartridges bellowed out a welcome near by, the donkeys—silly, excited creatures—brayed their level best with tails erect for five minutes right off, and even our faithful savages in salutation added to the general uproar with an impromptu war dance.

Ay! what a strangely jolly meeting it was!

In our wildest dreams of bygone City days we had never pictured ourselves coming together in the grand isolation of a mountain mining camp.

The nearest approach to discomfort and adventure that we ever arrived at then was an occasional boating trip, undertaken after most elaborate preparations in the way of tents, bedding, and provisions, and affording to our friends upon our return, a thrilling recital of derring-do and hardships undergone along the banks of the silvery Thames. What a contrast to those playful outings—when we flattered ourselves we were roughing it tremendously—was the matter-of-fact camp life in the wild solitude of rugged mountains.

The last time Bert and I had met was when I was on my way to Madagascar. There was no need this time for him to scramble over a ship's side in spotless ducks. Our time was now our own, and well it was so. There were three years of back talk to get through, to say nothing of future plans to be chipped over, and after inflation with mealy pap and green tea, we sat long together smoking our pipes outside the old tent, noting the dark shadows creeping up the valleys below, watching the gesticulations of Salt and Sara as they conversed in sonorous tones over the camp fire, and listening to the dreamy lullaby the night insects sang.

And then, after we had skirmished over news of mutual interest, Bert regaled me with a graphic account of his journey from Natal to the gold fields.

Accompanied by a certain Verdant Ivall—(Marry! but this name savours of the tournament and tilt, of some gallant knight born to chivalry and castles!)—Bert, deaf to the entreaties of the Archbishop to remain at Durban, took train from the coast.

Their railway journey from Durban to Ladysmith was a perfect honeymoon. For about eighteen hours, they were jammed in, the one between a dribble-bearded Hebrew and a garrulous Yankee (who "knew more than a thing or tu, you bet"), the other between a "lady of colour" and a sweet youth who alternately sucked oranges and spat on the windows.

At Ladysmith, the twain discovered that the Cobbs' coaches running to De Kaap were booked full for the next three weeks.

Time was of value, and the resourceful genius of Bert now asserted itself. He proposed, and Ivall agreed, that they should hand their traps over to the coach agent to be forwarded, and ride the three hundred miles to Barberton on horseback.

Ivall, who said he knew all about horses, was deputed to carry out the deal in hacks—good sound solid hacks he said they must be— not race-horses.

A few hours after it got abroad that they wanted horses, they had a sufficient number under offer to mount a cavalry brigade, at prices from thirty shillings to as many pounds, and most of them guaranteed "salted"—that is, animals said to have survived an attack of the virulent horse sickness peculiar to parts of the country, and consequently less liable to take the disease again.

Having purchased a couple of nags, two days later, belted and booted, they set out from Ladysmith, and on the first night halted by the banks of the Sundays River, under the hospitable roof of the Fox and Geese Hotel, a typical up-country hostelry, deriving its present sign from an incident which occurred during the Boer War. This incident, as related by the worthy host, was to the following effect :—

A detachment of Royal Engineers, under a certain Major Fox, being stationed near the hotel, beguiled

the monotony of camp life, and added to the resources of their commissariat, by indulging in what they called dry fishing.

Attaching a fish-hook, baited with some tasty morsel, to a long, stout piece of string, Tommy the Angler artfully laid his line in the open, happy hunting-grounds of the proprietor's pet geese, in the rear of the hotel premises.

Tommy secreted himself at the other end of the line, behind the nearest cactus hedge or sugar bush, and waited for the sport to nibble. After a preliminary peck round the baited hook, one of the Michaelmas specialities generally contrived to catch on, by gobbling down the bait, hook, and about half a yard of string.

Then Tommy, from his retreat, would haul in hand over hand, and the outspread cackler had to come, or tear something; its career after that was a blank.

Some time elapsed before the proprietor of the hotel solved the mystery of the departed geese; and then, by a strange coincidence, the festive Major, who had been in charge of the men, unsuspectingly related in his presence, with much gusto and evident approval, "how it was done!"

Revealing himself to the chagrined Major, the loser of the appropriated geese declared that the name of the hotel, then running under some other sign, should be significantly changed to the "Fox



and Geese." And he more than kept his word, for the sign-board of the hotel actually depicts the gallant Major "operating" on the geese, while his bold sappers in the background are carrying them off.



Leaving the Sundays River, Bert and Ivall pushed on via Biggarsberg to Newcastle, where they arrived without incident, except that seventy-one miles in the saddle had produced in the riders a phenomenal disinclination to sit down, and a fretful interest in unupholstered chairs.

Newcastle is a small colonial town, the centre of the Natal coal district, and noted by Bert as being chiefly remarkable for the number of its insolent, rancid coolie shopkeepers, styling themselves Arabian merchants.

A day's rest, and once more the bold cavaliers took gingerly to the saddles.

On past Schuins Hoogte, and Ingogo River, and then Mount Prospect was reached. Here the way-faring Englishman may step aside to linger for a moment over the quiet resting-place of one who fell vainly fighting to retrieve the hapless disaster of the 27th of February, 1881. Within a small enclosure a modest memorial indicates where poor Colley lies buried; and yonder, scarce two miles distant, the

frowning heights of Majuba itself almost cast their fateful shadows over him. It is better, perhaps, for Englishmen to forget the pitiful circumstances which led up to, and culminated in, that ever eventful reverse to British arms. Better, I say, to bury the past, and let bygones be bygones; and would to God it could be so! But how difficult is the task, our countrymen in the Transvaal alone can tell, for the puerility of ignorance can assuredly go no further when the national magnanimity of a powerful empire is still wilfully and offensively distorted into weakness, if not actual cowardice indeed, by the ultra-patriots of the stripling Republic with whom they mingle.

A few miles beyond Mount Prospect the warranted horseflesh of the sanguine Ivall's choice gave out.

The animal was so well "salted" that he might have been corned beef for all the good he was. The collapse came in a part of the country as barren as brickbats, and the outlook was, to say the least of it, dismal. They dosed the creature with quids of tobacco, rubbed his feverish temples with menthol, and wiped him down with Ivall's spare shirt. But nothing seemed to revive him. He had suddenly made up his mind to die of honest old age, and he settled down as calmly as a camel in a desert to do it. The worst of it was he took such a long while coming to a finish that at last Bert grew impatient, and said they ought to leave him and get on to the next place before sundown.

"We can go 'ride and tie' with my horse," he explained, with his superior colonial experience.

"How do you do that?" faltered Ivall.

"Oh, one of us will take the horse and ride on for, say, a quarter of an hour, then tie him up alongside the road and leave him for the one who is following on foot; and when he comes up he will take the horse and ride past the first man for a quarter of an hour, and so on, until we come to some place."

The plan appeared to be a good one, and Ivall consented to try it. He was to take the first "ride and tie," and Bert was to follow up on foot until he came to where Ivall had left the horse for him.

With the saddle and bridle taken off the sick horse strapped at his back, Ivall started away, and Bert paced bravely out after him along the hot, dusty track.

When he had tramped for about half an hour Bert began to think it was time he came up with the horse.

Another half hour without sign of man or beast, and he commenced to say unkind things about Ivall to the wayside antheaps. Half an hour more across the prairie, with no horse in sight, and Bert had raised the temperature several degrees with the warm language he was using, and even the soaring vultures kept aloof from him. Two hours later the sun went down, and Bert's fury rose, as still no horse appeared in sight. He lost the track, was as hungry as a starved cat, and as raw as a scraped tomato from the

ravages of swarming sand fleas. By groping around on all fours, and striking matches, he found the track again, and at last, a mile or two further on, arrived at a small store.

There he found the smiling Ivall, and his dovelike expression of contentment as he rippled out a silvery laugh at something funny the storekeeper said, just as Bert crawled in at the open door, acted the same as a red rag to a bull. It made Bert mad, and brought an avalanche of criminal libels down on Ivall.

The explanation was that Ivall, for want of a better halter post, had dropped the horse's bridle loosely over a large antheap, and gone on his way, and the horse had evidently broken loose from his moorings before Bert had time to come up. His own tramp to the store had been a considerable one, but he had attributed Bert's failure to overtake him on horseback to his own extraordinary pedestrianism, upon which he rather prided himself.

A hunt after the missing quadruped early the next morning failed to discover its whereabouts; and for a day and a-half the pair were stranded at the solitary storekeeper's, minus everything but what they stood up in, and with a melancholy foreboding that they were doomed never to reach the gold fields.

Happily, on the second day, a train of transport-waggons passed on their way to Barberton, and, by arrangement with the owners, they were enabled to continue their journey with them.

Slowly they travelled on through illimitable barrenness stretching in sweeping undulations beyond the ken of vision ; ridges, boulder clad, rising gently, one above another, until they receded in the purple blue distance, through a quivering sea of heat waves, where only the indistinct outline of a hill could be seen far away.

The only excitement that occurred to break the incessant monotony of inspanning and outspanning was Bert's adventure with a teamster's whip.

The whip, a huge weapon with stock and thong altogether some thirty feet in length, coming into Bert's hands one day, he essayed to wield it after the dexterous manner of the teamster to whom it belonged.



He hauled away a short distance (as those interested declined to let him demonstrate within fifty yards of them), and put in a few flourishes round a big anthheap, which he succeeded in demolishing. Waxing bolder, he worked the thong up to a terrific swirl above his head, thinking to bring it down with the ear-splitting report he had heard the teamster make. But it was worse than a mining expert ; the weapon refused to report at all, still less give a decent one. It did the other thing. With a horrible hiss it swung itself round, and spliced

up Bert and the whipstock together, with the irresistible swiftness of a boa-constrictor. Bert gave a dying yell—at least, he thought it was a dying yell—and fell, a mangled mummy, to the ground. When he came to, after being unrolled, stuck together, and rubbed down, he told the sympathetic little crowd gathered about him that the use of such weapons ought to be discouraged.

At last the waggons arrived at Lake Chrissie, where Ivall and Bert, being so mighty anxious for a “bit of sport,” mistook half-a-dozen tame cranes for wild ostriches, and blazed away at them for five minutes with their revolvers before the excessive joy of the pets’ owner expressed itself in frantic shouts across the lake, and upset the fun.

Three days more, and Bert and his whilom travelling companion reached the famed De Kaap, not much the worse for wear, take them all over, but still a little sore in places where they hadn’t mended.

At Barberton the genial Ivall fell in with old chums, and Bert, without tarrying, came on to Excelsior City, accompanied by the Swazie boy Sara.

## CHAPTER XV.

A WORD ABOUT PROSPECTORS — PROSPECTORS' BOGIES —  
"REEFING" AMONG THE GOLD HILLS: THE MODUS  
OPERANDI—GROWTH OF BARBERTON—A MINING BOOM—  
ANOTHER KIND OF GOLD MINE—ARRIVAL OF THE MAIL—  
AFTER A STORM, A CALM.

THE vicissitudes of a prospector's life are proverbial. A dominant fascination pervades it, for the spirit of gambling is largely present. "Once a prospector, always a prospector," is a truism applicable to nine men out of ten who have wooed Fortune behind a gold pan. Bad luck, a roving spirit, and a constitution undermined by fever and exposure, are too often the only results attained after years of ceaseless toil spent in search of hidden wealth.

Hope is the prospector's talisman. The charm of uncertainty, rather than the desire for riches, is the main factor in his existence, and impels him to struggle on against endless difficulties and bitter disappointments.

Even when Fortune smiles upon him, and he makes a "strike," only too frequently the sudden turn of the tide overwhelms him, and, long denied the ordinary comforts of life, he spends a short, sweet time in

dissipating his windfall, and then, with the complacency of a philosopher, returns to oblivion in the wilds until luck again favours him.

A poor friend to the successful, but unwary, prospector is the so-called financial agent—the man who, if the prospector, from lack of funds, be unable himself to develop the property he has discovered, undertakes to provide the necessary assistance. Numbers of these agents are to be found living at their ease on the fat of the land in every new and thriving mining camp. They grandiloquently style themselves promoters, and give out that they are the accredited representatives of big European financial houses, or of some powerful syndicate. About one in a dozen may be such. The rest are shiftless adventurers who live on the credulity of the prospector. Under the pretence of developing the claims prior to the formation of a company, by simple but effectual chicanery, they set about freezing out the man who has often gone through unspeakable hardships in unearthing the prize. When at last, through sheer want, the prospector has been compelled to relinquish all his interest in the mine for a mess of pottage, his evil genius—the agent—provided with a pocketful of friendly reports, trips away to market (usually long-suffering London), where he glibly palms off the property, now his own, at a figure ugly enough to make the hair stand on end of the most sanguine man who chances to know anything of the actual worth of the claims sold.



What reck these gentry whether they scandalise half London with their swindles and damn the way for honest men? The purlieus of Whitechapel shall shelter them! They shall be as the very salt of the earth when periodically they swagger aboard the liners which bear them to and fro.

Yet another ogre to the genuine prospector must I mention, and I have done. For, mark you, Bert and I have been prospectors, and prospectors are likely to occupy attention in the next few pages. They are among the indispensable gamblers of life—the men who first bring to light the treasures of Mother Earth—the pioneers of mining. Wanderers of necessity in the dark corners of the world, they are little heard of, and less known, by the majority of their fellow-men.

The “jumper,” then, is another individual who harasses the life of the prospector. He is a sneaking drone who takes advantage of some legal quibble to seize another man's claims; in other words, not to be paradoxical, he is a legalised thief. Like the agent, he usually lives at his ease in the nearest mining camp. Not infrequently the “jumper” is himself a bogus agent, the bogus agent himself a “jumper”; in any case, the two species are kindred spirits, closely allied, and literally as thick as thieves.

If, for some reason, the prospector fails to shepherd (*i.e.*, work) his claims at stated intervals in accordance with the requirements of the gold laws, the “jumper,” coming to hear of it, steps in without warning or

mercy, re-pegs the property, and lays formal claim thereto at the Gold Commissioner's office. Or should the licenses under which the claims are held be allowed to expire for a few hours over the month for which they are granted and are renewable, or should the beacon pegs, unperceived by the prospector, fall out of the perpendicular, or in any other way the slightest legal flaw occur, down swoops the "jumper" like a carrion, and appropriates the property.

It would be impossible to adequately detail here the dramatic incidents created by the nefarious practices of these men during the recent gold booms in South Africa. The fierce quarrels, the deadly enmities aroused, the nocturnal scenes enacted in the mountains, would provide a fitting and interesting sequel to more than one flaring prospectus issued in this country of gold mines, "jumped," counter-"jumped," and "jumped" again from the original owners. Recent legislation in the Transvaal, granting some degree of fixity of tenure to mining property, has curtailed the operations of the "jumper" considerably; but has not altogether weeded him out, for here and there he blossoms yet, like the gaudy poppy of the cornfield.

Elsewhere I have briefly touched upon alluvial gold mining. Let me now shortly trace, for the benefit of the uninitiated, the *modus operandi* of winning "reef" gold—a far more important branch of mining than alluvial, since nine-tenths of the

precious metal finding its way into the bullion vaults of the Bank of England, passes through the quartz mill.

The fissure veins or lodes, commonly called "reefs," in which gold is embedded in its true natural state in infinitesimal particles, are generally located in what are known as gold belts—that is to say, in well-defined zones traversing various parts of the globe. Usually, the country in which gold has been discovered in any appreciable quantity has been subjected in remote ages of the world's history to volcanic upheaval, the intense heat of the rocky masses, as they have burst up in a boiling state through the earth's crust, causing a percentage of fused gold, otherwise termed nugget gold, to be shed into the surrounding loam or gravels, where eventually, by the action of water, it has, as a rule, found a natural level in the valleys, creeks, and gullys, and in the beds of rivers.

The configuration of the De Kaap Gold Fields affords a striking example of violent volcanic upheaval. For many miles round, the country is a chaotic jumble of irregular rocky krantzies and naked mountain ridges—one grand sea of blue-grey summits. Still, in this confused mass, the "reefs," together with other rocky formations, retain certain lines of continuity, so that the experienced prospector is usually capable of endowing his peregrinations with some amount of method. An outcrop here, a "blow" there, a rocky snake-like trail across the mountains, is

sufficient to guide the old hand in choosing a lay of country for the chip of his prospecting hammer.

Having chosen a promising tract of country for his fossicking, and equipped himself with tools, tent, blankets, provisions, etc., sufficient to keep him going for a considerable time, the prospector departs for the wilds, and pitches his tent in the vicinity of water, if possible, preparatory to roaming forth each day in search of the hidden Eldorado he fondly expects to find. Returning to his camp before sundown with what might very reasonably be taken by the outsider for a haversackful of road macadam, he sets about pulverising each piece of stone separately with the aid of an iron pestle and mortar. Then he "pans off," as it is termed. Provided with a specially constructed large shallow iron pan, into which he transfers the powdered sample of stone, he proceeds to wash away all but the heavier particles of mineral matter, finally "tailing" out from the latter, by a practised vibratory action of the water in the pan, any minute deposit of gold the sample may contain. If a good "prospect" result from the panning, he loses no time in returning to the spot where he chipped the sample from the main lode, and secures one or more claims\* by taking out claim licenses and erecting beacon pegs duly inscribed with name, date, and other particulars required by the gold laws.

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\* A "reef" claim under the gold laws of the Transvaal is 150 feet along the line of reef, and 400 feet across.

For the rest, the prospector either proceeds to further exploit the property himself, or endeavours to enlist outside capital for the purpose, usually, through the medium of the agents before referred to.

The systematic development of a gold "reef" is a most costly undertaking, and, generally speaking, beyond the means of individuals. Both the actual mining in the hard rock, and the heavy milling machinery required to win the gold, demand a considerable outlay of capital, so that it is usual, after the worth of a property has been reasonably proved, to hand it over to a company for further development, and the erection of machinery, etc.

When operations commence on a large scale with the ponderous stamping machinery, the gold is extracted from the quartz precisely on the same principle, up to a certain point, as in the diminutive panning performances of the prospector. That is to say, the quartz is pulverised by huge stamps until fine enough to pass through wire screens, when, by a continual stream of water, it is carried over mercurialised copper plates, placed at a slight angle below the stampers—the gold in its passage being drawn away from the débris by the mercury on the plates.

The mercury, when it has absorbed such percentage of gold as it can retain, is called amalgam, and when scraped off the plates is much the consistency of soft putty. In order to separate the gold from the quicksilver, the amalgam is retorted, and the retorted or

"pudding" gold thus obtained is then shipped to Europe, where the more elaborate process of refining reduces it to a pure state in the form of bar gold.

In the few months that elapsed between my own arrival and Bert's coming to the Fields, Barberton had grown, with extraordinary rapidity, from the dimensions of a respectable kafir kraal, into the flourishing centre of a new gold district, some hundreds of square miles in extent. Each week saw scores of new arrivals flocking from the south into the mushroom township, sheltered amid the almost inaccessible ramparts of the Drakensberg. From the dangerous frailty of the trotting spider to the lumbering massiveness of the biggest ox-waggon, all kinds and conditions of conveyances continued to bring in their equally heterogeneous freights of adventurers.

Tents, huts, houses, and iron shanties of every conceivable shape and description sprang up round the original camp, expanding it with the celerity and instability of an overgrown English horse fair.

Farmers, merchants, miners, clerks, storemen, and bohemians of every nationality helped to swell the motley throng which swarmed towards the De Kaap to "make a spoon, or spoil the material."

Then commenced the remarkable mining boom, which continued intermittingly, with the subsequent rushes to Witwatersrandt and other districts, for four or five years, putting an end to trade depression, rescuing the Transvaal from abject poverty, and marking

an era of political and social activity throughout the Cape peninsula, such as before was conceived to be impossible, in the face of the hopeless state of lethargy into which the whole country had apparently lapsed.

It is not given to many men to participate more than once in their life in the stirring events of a big mining boom in a new country.

To such as have gone through the experience even once, the hopes, the successes, the disappointments, will ever remain green to the memory, associated as they must be with reminiscences of a period of feverish excitement spent in the midst of strange surroundings.

Numbers of those who rushed to the De Kaap in 1886 had neither inclination nor intention to seek gold in the capacity of prospectors. Canteen-keeping proved to some a richer gold mine than many a "reef" pegged out by prospector. Barberton and district could hardly have totalled more than five thousand men, when curiosity prompted me to roughly tally the drinking saloons.

The number, I recollect, was over seventy in Barberton alone.

In these drinking shops, camp life at that time may be said to have centred itself. The sober digger and the brawling miner rubbed shoulders together in the rudely-constructed bars, where, almost without cessation, the vilest Squareface, the fiercest "Cape smoke," and the most explosive of whiskeys, was doled out in the smallest of shilling "thimble tots."

For the man anxious to keep pace with current events, it was part of his routine, when in from the hills, to do the round of certain bars, from the "Blue-nosed Prospector" to the "Redeyed Jumper," not necessarily to drink, but to meet the men who came and went between the various outlying districts, and to learn the latest digging news.

The nearest telegraph station was Pretoria, some two hundred and fifty miles distant, and as for mails, there were only two a week—one with European letters five weeks old, *viâ* the Diamond Fields, and another with a colonial post from Natal. On account of the distance to be traversed, the absence of proper roads, the flooding of rivers, and other causes, the mails were often much delayed, and great was the stir in camp when at last the faint tootling of the coach-horn could be heard far across the De Kaap Valley, and the rattletrap chariot of the Deadwood coach order, drawn by a team of ten or a dozen mules, appeared, to the anxious knot of men already gathered round the little mail office, to be crawling at a snail's pace toward the isolated settlement.

Scarcely a day passed without the most extravagant rumours being rife as to some wonderful "strike."

Such and such a prospector was said to have discovered a reef rotten with gold. Another would be credited with having found a second edition of King Solomon's Mines.



Then, helter-skelter, men would rush off to see what the new find was like, and, if possible, peg out extension claims on either side of the original prospector.

On every hand the wildest talk was current.

Sober-minded men seemed to lose their heads, and gave credence to the most fanciful stories. Immense sums were said to be changing hands for claims just discovered, and men who had but recently arrived on the Fields, in a state bordering on poverty, were adjudged to be suddenly wealthy to the extent of thousands. Properties were taken up with avidity all round for flotation into companies, and the buying and selling of mining shares added to the delirium. The nominal pound shares of one company, as an instance, changed hands at considerably over one hundred pounds a-piece, and in many other cases equally chimerical prices were quoted.

As the heavy rains commenced toward the close of the year, malarial fever, as I have before said, became very prevalent throughout the De Kaap Fields, and a lull in the hurly-burly ensued, and continued for some months.

## CHAPTER XVI.

BERT ADVOCATES GOING TO THE "ZOO"—HE CARRIES HIS POINT—PREPARATIONS FOR THE JOURNEY—CAMP CRITICISMS—A VISIT TO THE SHEBA MINE—WE PITCH OUR CAMP—BERT'S OLD MANIA—I CARRY MY POINT—LIONS!!!—A THRILLING ADVENTURE.

ONCE more I felt secure, in the knowledge that I had with me the master mind of Bert to help "fix things up."

There were plenty of things to fix up, too, when the rainy season was over, and the time came round for us to commence our prospecting campaign.

Throughout the wet months we had stuck religiously to the hills, leaving the valleys to fools and fever.

Poor old Harry the Reefer's claims, turned out valueless, and it behoved us to be "pulling our socks up," as the Scots say.

I found I had not been at all circumspect in telling Bert, after he joined me, that I thought the part of the country most likely to turn out trumps was the Lebombo district, away towards the Crocodile River. Subsequent inquiries elicited the unwholesome information

(though I might have guessed as much) that the locality was simply a vast uncaged "Zoo," the habitat of almost every species of creature, worth talking about, that went into the Ark. It was a hunter's paradise. That is of course why Bert said at once it was just the place to go prospecting. Whether there was gold there or not, he was determined to drag me to my death after a "bit of sport" among the lions, the crocodiles, the rhinoceri, and all the other hungry, bloodthirsty brutes, roaming at large without owners or licenses, or even a cats' meat man to feed them down to an approachable condition of tameness.

"See what a splendid chance there will be to make a big bag. Why, some fellows come out from the old country on purpose to have a go at big game, and here it is right at our elbow, and yet you want to go prospecting in another direction. It's just like you. You always snub me when I try to arrange anything lively." And then Bert went off in a tantrum, and bullied the niggers to relieve himself.

The long and the short of it was I had to give in, as usual.

Then came the preparations for wandering about in the menagerie for three or four months. I felt like a man going to learn the lion-taming business against his will. If I came back alive, I intended to be grateful, and lead a better life, and be kinder to everybody.

If, on the other hand, I got spread about as bone

manure, I mentally resolved, if Bert survived me, to make it unpleasant for him with all there was left over of me to make a ghost.

After dismantling Excelsior City, we went into Barberton to fit out for the expedition.

Tradition has it that no one ever saw a dead donkey or a dying post-boy, and so at De Kaap the immortal nature of the indigenous ass was reputed to rise superior to the mundane pangs of ordinary fatigue and hunger experienced by other beasts of burden. This, and a similar immunity from death from the mysterious local cattle sickness and the onslaughts of the fatal tsetse-fly, rendered it an indispensable animal for our purposes; therefore, besides the three I had inherited, we bought three more to assist in transporting our camp equipage and the prodigious accumulation of small necessities that resulted from a morbid idea we evidently both secretly entertained, that we were leaving civilisation for the remainder of our natural lives.

What might be called the dead-weight portion of the cargo consisted of two hundred-weight of meal as a staple food supply, thirty pounds of brown sugar, twenty pounds of flour for Bert to make Sunday pastry—(paper-weights!)—out of, and thirty-five samples of various kinds of tinned meat atrocities. The remainder of the freight was made up of the aforesaid small necessities, and might have scaled anything from two to three hundred-weight more.

It was three days before everything was ready for a start.

The donkeys, equipped with pack saddles and panniers, each received an average burden of about seventy pounds; both the boys, Salt and Sara, who faithfully elected to go with us, also carried a tightly corded load each, on their heads, of from thirty to forty pounds, while Bert and I did our share of portorage with well-laden haversacks slung over our shoulders.

We made a bold array as we wheeled into marching order, and filed out of camp, amid the unbiassed criticisms of the lounging patrons of the "Bluenosed Prospectors" and "Redeyed Jumpers."

"Where are you goin' tradin', mates?" shouted one brawny old hand.

"They ain't a-goin' tradin'. They're off with the price of a concession up 'Shonaland way. Look how they're smilin'."

"Take plenty of beads an' lookin' glasses for the gals in the 'arems if you want to pull off the deal, boss," broke in another genial well-wisher. And then a drawling party from California set everyone else right with his version.

"Snakes! Their biz ain't tradin', nor concessionizin' neither. They're gettin' on the war trail to suppress a risin' among the blacks somewheres."

This last individual was palpably struck with our ample display of small-arms, for Bert and I each

shouldered a sporting rifle, besides the revolvers at our belts, and one of the boys was carrying another gun—a double-barrelled smooth bore. I was at one with Bert this time about the necessity of being well armed, for I meant to die hard in the menagerie if any of the brutes came loafing round me when they felt sinking. If Bert had suggested acquiring a Gatling-gun or a Nordenfeldt, or any other kind of artillery that would have afforded a greater sense of security, I should have agreed to pawn my boots to assist the purchase.

We only got as far as the Sheba Hill the first night. The Sheba property had recently been discovered, and under the wing of the prospector—a hale old Yorkshireman—we were amply rewarded for the time we spent in visiting the famous mine the next morning. It nearly turned Bert's brain when he saw the mountain of quartz, that was then yielding 8 ozs. of gold to the ton, at Rimer's Battery, near Barberton.

"You know, if I thought I could safely stand the shock, I shouldn't mind coming suddenly on to a property like that myself," he said. And the bare idea that he *might* suffer such a shock any day when we got to work prospecting in the Zoo, so upset me, that I implored him to think of his health and the risk he would run, suggesting that we might stave off the peril to some extent by going in another direction, where there was less probability of coming on to such a fat thing all at once. Bert said he was

deeply touched at my concern for his welfare, but for my sake he would struggle bravely on and take the risk.

From the Sheba to the Crocodile River was an awful tramp.

We were no longer inhaling the bracing air of the hills, but passing along stifling valleys running between mountain spurs, clad with the wild aloe and giant thorn bushes, and where the tall rank grass waved high above our heads, affording dangerous cover to snakes, and at times rendering it difficult for us to follow the narrow native footpaths along which we were threading our way in single file.

Now and again the sharp cry of "Nyorka!" from the boys, an exclamation from Bert or myself, or a frightened swerving of the donkeys, proclaimed the stealthy passage of some deadly reptile across the track. One of the most venomous of these, which almost entangled itself about my legs, I succeeded in killing—thanks to its slothfulness.

It was a puff-adder, little more than a couple of feet in length—a mere worm compared to the terrible blue-black mamba, measuring over twelve feet in length, which Bert soon afterwards killed, but nevertheless an interesting specimen both on account of its beautiful tapestry-like skin, and because it was one of a species possessing the unique peculiarity of throwing their whole length backwards, hoop-fashion, in attacking their assailants.

A week's marching in easy stages, brought us to that part of the country we proposed to exploit.

We had arrived at the outer fringe of the mountainous De Kaap region, and before us, as far north as the Sabie River, swept the great unbroken expanse of the Lebombo Plains.

From the slight elevation of our prospecting camp, which we pitched alongside a small stream at the foot of the last mountain spur, the Crocodile River could be seen winding for miles on its silvery course between the stunted timber-growth of the plains, to join the waters of the Komatie on the borders of the Portuguese Mozambique territory.

When we had put the camp in order, and recovered sufficiently from the fatigue of the journey to undertake fresh exertions, we commenced to look about us.

The worst of it was, Bert and I could not quite agree as to the nature of our business. Directly he began to feel fit again, he wanted to organise a shooting expedition. It was just as I expected. His "sporting" proclivities were going to be the bane of my life while we remained in that part of the country, unless I put my foot down.

Bert, I could see, had inherited strongly the Englishman's propensity for "going out to kill something." He had started in the nursery by pea-shooting flies, and having graduated in catapulting sparrows and worrying cats, had now reached the acute stage of the mania, when he wanted to take to slaughtering as a profession.



"Look here," I said, assuming an air of severity foreign to my nature ; "I came out to go prospecting, not to make a fool of myself climbing trees and hunting up stray animals."

As for collecting noble hunting trophies—another inducement which he urged for going—I pointed out that we could do the thing the same as other fellows, just as nobly, and much more comfortably, by getting a veracious museum together in a Cape Town curiosity shop when the time came for us to return to England. I could put my lionising in better that way.

Carting a ton or two of skins, horns, bones, teeth, tails, and other miscellaneous shamble refuse round the country, for the sake of eventually being able to say to our admiring relatives and friends that we had brought them unimpeachable evidence to identify us with personal bloody encounters with wild animals, was all exploded sentiment.

Under the strain of such cast-iron arguments Bert collapsed, and we went prospecting.

For some time, the only result of our fossicking was to confirm the disorderly character of the district, as regarded the number of unlicensed animals about. In the ordinary course of prospecting, we fell in with sufficient game of all kinds to cloy even Bert's inordinate appetite for sport. Counting what we saw, what we shot, and what we missed, it was satisfactory to hear him declare that he was enjoying himself. - Besides a small crocodile, a koodoo, a

leopard, and a boa-constrictor, there fell to our guns in less than a fortnight several small species of buck, a fine silver-grey eagle, and two porcupines. Once we saw a quagga, and at another time caught a glimpse of a small troop of buffalo; but, in both instances, the animals were out of range.

The mournful howls of wolves and jackals, and the occasional apparitions of pairs of glowing eye-balls, peering at us through the darkness between the trees, forbade us to wander far from the protection of our camp fires after nightfall, and scant rest fell to our lot until our quickened senses became gradually accustomed to regard the flimsy shelter of a patrol-tent, and the doubtful companionship of two natives, as effectual security against our surroundings.

To crown these pleasantries, we soon discovered that the presence of lions in the Lebombo was no myth.

Scarcely a night passed that we did not hear the king of the forest prowling in more or less close proximity to the camp.

Contrary to our expectations, his majesty, or their majesties rather (there being more than one), seldom indulged in the awful cavern-mouthed earth-shaking roars we had been led to believe they did, according to the indisputable authority of the pretty picture-books of our nursery days.

The lion's roar, like his prowess, is somewhat a fallacy. It is only on the rarest occasions that he

lets out in that way—when his liver is out of order, and he is having ructions over the garden wall with his next door neighbour; or when domestic affairs have gone wrong at home, and he is scraping the carpet with his housekeeper. At other times, when, for instance, he goes for a stroll after sundown, he merely places his nose to the ground at intervals, and utters a growling snort—a snort, nevertheless, which I have heard from two to three miles off on a calm night.

Returning rather later than usual one afternoon from prospecting, Bert and I got benighted some short distance from camp. Neither of us showed any inclination to talk much, for we both felt tired, and anything but comfortable at the idea of darkness overtaking us. The night soon became black, and before long we were feeling rather than seeing our way between the small trees that thickly studded our path.

Thus blindly advancing—our ears keenly alert to the slightest noise, our eyes straining in the impenetrable darkness to catch the first gleam of the camp fires through the foliage—our hearts gave a bound as the sudden crackling of the undergrowth in front, caused us involuntarily to stop short and listen. Almost immediately there followed another and more ominous sound, that sent a thrill of terror through us, as we recognised in it the half articulated growl of a lion.

"It's all up with us," moaned Bert, "he must be close to us."

"Save us! ke-ke-keep cool, old fellow," I whispered; "perhaps he's going in another direction, but it did sound awfully close."

And then there ensued a stilly silence that seemed worse than death. We dared scarcely breathe as we crouched, staring forth into the utter darkness, expecting, each moment, to be crushed to earth by the massive paw of the brute, lurking Heaven only knew how near us.

One, two, three, four minutes must have passed, though they might have been so many years for the agony of suspense that was crowded into them.

Presently, as no further sound reached us, the extreme tension from which we had at first suffered eased somewhat, and we began to support each other with little comforting remarks.

"I hope you don't feel nervous, chummy. It's all right, you know. I'll shoot the beast if he comes too near," said Bert reassuringly, in a hollow voice.

"Oh n-no, I'm as fit as a fiddle, old boy. I-I was only afraid the strain might have been too much for you," I replied tenderly, in asthmatical tones.

"Hark! what's that!" we gasped in chorus.

The same horrible sounds transfixed us once more, but this time they appeared to be much nearer, and we could hear the animal blowing as he stealthily approached with his big muzzle, taking the scent along the ground.

A cold shiver ran down my back. I felt we were doomed men, and stretched out my hand in the darkness to take a last farewell of Bert. I pawed the air round me in every direction. I prattled out a fervid appeal to him not to play spoof with me.

He was gone !

A minute before he had been close alongside me, and in my extremity I cursed this latest development of dark séance.

In waltzing round for Bert, my head battered up against the trunk of a giant thorn.

The tree stayed where it was, which satisfied me that Providence had placed it there for the sole purpose of my deliverance, and not as a test of my thick-headedness ; therefore I postponed looking for Bert until I had more time on my hands, and forthwith proceeded to claw up it with an agility that was considerably enhanced by a blood-freezing snort, vented right beneath my dangling extremities, at the moment I ceased hugging the trunk and successfully clutched the first branch.

Although the tree was not a high one, and its thorns were as plentiful as tacks in a penny packet, the elevation it afforded revived my drooping spirits wonderfully.

The devouring brute below me was foiled. I had never heard of a lion climbing a tree ; even the picture-book authorities, I remembered, drew the line there.

When I had fully established this important fact to my own satisfaction, I settled down to roost in the branches for the rest of the night, firmly resolved that nothing less than dynamite, or a cyclone, should bring me down until daylight appeared.

To say that the vigil was an anxious one would be to parody an intensely exciting episode in my life. I was on thorns—two-inch thorns—for something like nine hours. When the first faint glimpse of grey dawn broke upon my miseries, I was a wreck of my former self.

Throughout the night the remorseless brute that had treed me kept watch with terrible vigilance at the base of the tree, and caused me mental suffering that was even more poignant than the agony of a thorn-jabbed cuticle.

As the darkness gradually lifted, I cast around for sight of my blood-thirsty foe; but with the first signs of returning day, the cowardly creature had slunk behind some adjacent bushes, where, nevertheless, he revealed his presence by emitting occasional snorts. In gazing about, I discerned a strange object in another tree about twenty yards away.

Lodged in the branches was a huddled mass of humanity. As I'm a sinner, it was Bert. I hailed him.

"Ahoy! where away!" I shouted, with a sickly effort to be cheerfully nautical.

"Wear away be hanged. Ain't I nearly worn away already?" came the groaning response.

"I say, don't you think we ought to try and shoot the beast now we can see him?"

"Who says we can see him? I can't see him, and if I could I haven't got my gun. It's on the ground; but if you like to slip down and hand it up to me I'll keep a sharp look-out, you know."

The noble-hearted fellow meant what he said, but I could not allow it. I could not see my dear friend heroically jeopardising himself to save me!

"No!" I said, with emotional emphasis, "you shall not do it. I will take the risk of keeping the look-out, while *you* run across and pass up *my* gun."

This tender solicitude for each other's safety is growing on us, and will bring disaster some day. The negotiations fell through, and I nearly did the same in craning round to see what new manœuvre our enemy was trying at the back of my tree, where I heard him blowing and carrying on in a manner that was too brazen for the royal dignity of any well-conducted lion.

Protruding from behind some bushes, I saw the brute's head. The sight of the creature that had caused me such misery imbued me with a sudden craving for revenge, and with the courage of frenzied recklessness I clambered down to the ground.

"Heavens, man! what are you getting down for?" cried Bert, in unadulterated alarm.

"I cannot see you suffering up there any longer,

old fellow," I replied, firmly, as I picked up my rifle at the foot of the tree, and passed into the bushes.

"Come back," shrieked Bert; "are you mad?"

But I had disappeared. In a couple of minutes, however, I returned, and led forward quietly our smallest buck donkey by one of his ventilators. I had found him sniffing and blowing peacefully among the herbage, preparatory to starting on his morning's browse!



As Bert mournfully unhooked himself and tumbled down from his perch, he came up to me with a sad, sweet smile, and grasping my hand said, in a husky voice :

"You are a grand fellow. The way you climbed down that tree and courted death at a lion's jaws was worthy of a Daniel."

It was the proudest moment of my life.

"Don't speak about it, old boy," I answered, tremulously; "you may be able to do as much for me some day."

And then we silently mounted our quondam lion, and rode pillion-tandem back to camp, and gave the wreckage of our garments to our astonished boys, telling them that if they allowed any of the donkeys to stray about again at night, while we were in a lion country, we should draw their back teeth with a crowbar.



## CHAPTER XVII.

OUR DONKEYS!—BLATANT ROUÉS—MUSIC HATH CHARMS—A  
TALE OF TAILS—MORE LIONS!!—A BATTLE ROYAL—BERT  
GIVES THE "COUP DE GRACE."



NLY once did we hear Leo roar during our sojourn in the "Zoo"—in the Lebombo "Zoo," of course.

It was when we went in search of a lost donkey.

The donkeys, by the bye, were a continual source of anxiety to us, on account of the disreputable manner in which they behaved themselves.

Individually, and collectively, they were about the most abandoned six donkeys that ever conspired together to worry their fond owners to death. Their subtle depravity was awful. They lost themselves singly, they lost themselves in a body, for days together. They came home at all hours of the day

and night, and when they were supposed to be grazing miles away one or two of them would saunter leisurely into camp in the middle of the day, and, during the temporary absence of the boy we had left in charge, capsize the dinner-pot simmering over the camp fire, finish off the contents—if it were to their taste—kick over the water buckets, get a hind foot



hopelessly wedged into the mouth of our only kettle, back themselves into the tents and roll on our bedding, chew our reserve stock of literature into a pulp—they were most partial to old newspapers—do “God bless the Duke of Argyle” up against the tent pole until they brought the whole show down, and then stand serenely over the ruins and contemplate results.

The desperado that “treed” us for nine hours brought the night-rambling business to a climax. Hitherto we had trusted to the animals’ sense of decency as a sole restraining influence to keep them close to camp once the boys had driven them in from grazing. When we found they abused this confidence, to slip off and waylay respectable people directly darkness fell, we made rope halters and picketted every Jack and Jenny of them to trees round the camp at night.

They submitted to this new order of things in

patient silence for several nights. Such peaceable surrender of their freedom was, however, too good to last. Their quietude was just as pregnant with disaster as the hush of small boys with a packet of squibs round a corner. They thoroughly discussed the situation between themselves quietly, and then started to wreck our happy home with classical music. Bert said it was a symphonetic rendering of Wagner's B flat setting of "Home, Sweet Home," with extra variations. I took his word for it, and wished I had been born a century earlier.

We were nearly delirious for three nights with the din, and chronic insomnia stared us in the face. On the third night Bert hit on a remedy. About midnight, as the donkeys were executing the last few bars of the grand bash of one of their finest selections, he sprang up and bolted out of the tent. For half-an-hour I could hear him working in among the members of the orchestra, dragging, pulling and execrating with the energy of a dock-lumper. When he had finished, and had crept back to the tent again, the deep silence reigning outside pointed to a general slaughter.

"What have you been doing to the poor brutes?" I asked nervously, as I heard him chuckling to himself in the dark with horrible significance.

"Ha-ha! Never mind, I've settled them," came reply with smothered satisfaction from amid the blankets.

I went to sleep. It showed fearful callousness on

my part I admit, but the restored quiet of the camp was blissful, and I dozed off to dream about six misguided donkeys that had fallen victims to high art and a pickshaft in a forest glen of a far country.

In the morning I turned out as usual before Bert. The donkeys were not slaughtered. They were anchored to the ground by their tails.

The caudal appendage of each one was retained at its proper angle of repose, with plenty of scope for legitimate movement, by a piece of cord attached to a large stone lying on the ground. The animals stood looking as meek as maggots. I rushed back to ask Bert what it all meant.



“ Well, you see, it suddenly struck me, as I lay here listening to that beastly row last night, that I had never heard donkeys bray with the force and expression of ours without noticing that they had to raise their tails to gain a leverage to help themselves along ; so I thought I would go to the root of the evil—the tails—and try what a little ballast would do.”

The result was eminently satisfactory, and among the prospectors Bert thereafter was looked upon with much the same admiring gratitude as the men who have benefited humanity by discovering the circulation of the blood, vaccination, and panacea pills.

But about Leo's roar.

Yes, it was whilst searching for one of the little sinners I have been digressing over that we heard and saw lions for the one occasion only during our prospecting campaign.

The animal had been missing for some days, but that in itself would not have induced us to go and look for it, as there was poor chance that we should succeed in a search in which our boys, accustomed as they were to tracking spoors like sleuthhounds, had already failed after scouring the country.

The fact was, that close to the river, about a mile and a-half distant from our camp, there was a small stony rise (a kopje), in the rocky recesses of which we had reason to believe the lions had formed a lair. This was quite enough to arouse immense enthusiasm in Bert, who declared that our donkey would be found down there dead or alive, and nothing short of a pitched battle with the brutes in their own kennel would clear up the mystery, and he said the interests of science also required that we should do it for the information of brother naturalists.

He made me wild. I told him I had no brother naturalist surviving me; that I did not feel scientifically competent to undertake the massacre; and I doubted his ability to do it himself, as my faith in his shooting powers had never been robust since the tiger-cat episode; and to go teasing wild animals with a man who was not a cool dead shot would

disqualify me, as an intending suicide, under my life policy.

But I was unable to dissuade Bert from his purpose; at least, all I was able to do was to effect a compromise, whereby I consented to accompany him on the understanding that our operations were not to be offensively bellicose right away. We were simply to reconnoitre the position; hostilities were to be undertaken at my option only—(if the lions were agreeable).

“About sunset, you know, will be the time to go down,” said Bert; “we shall stand a better chance then of——”

“Finding the lions peckish?”

“No, you dunderhead! Of seeing them, if there are any, come out for their night’s prowl.”

“Yes, yes; same thing!” I murmured, marvelling at my own resignation, and Bert’s sudden acquisition of leonine valour since we had spent a certain night in thorn trees; and as I gazed dreamily across at the little hill standing out prominently in the landscape, I dreaded to think what a dreary waste, what a hopeless vacuity the lives of some men would be, who could not thus immolate themselves in the interests of science and “a bit of sport.”

“When all my back numbers come in, bury me decently in a gunny bag under the shade of yon cacti; let the funeral be a quiet one, and drop my people a line to let them know my pickings are——”

"Oh, confound it, shut up! You are enough to give a fellow the horrors when there's no occasion for it. Why, I don't see any more danger in it, if we are careful, than going to shoot rabbits."

"Or tiger-cats?" I queried meekly.

About an hour before sunset we started for the den, each armed with a Martini and a dozen rounds



of ammunition, a loaded six-chambered revolver, Bert with his sporting knife, and I with the camp hatchet.

The weight of my share of this armament, the sobering effect of wearing a seven-pound pair of hob-nailed diggers' boots, and the leaden tendency of my musings, made me feel about as buoyant as a drowning crusader.

Near the kopje, as we approached it from the camp, there was a small donga—a short dry gully running down to the river. Alongside this we crept cautiously to within fifty yards of the hillock, and then halted for a moment to look to our rifles and brace ourselves for the final *dénouement*.

"What are you going to do with those things?" inquired Bert, as he noticed me twisting a couple of twigs into light hoops.

"Hush! Hi, hi! Whoop-la! We can't expect

to draw a crowd and make a success of the business without them," I explained, with the instinct of a menagerie man growing strong within me.

"Don't play the fool!" said the brutal Bert, who further harrowed my feelings by suggesting, with the air of a jail chaplain addressing a hardened criminal on the day of execution, that I failed to appreciate the gravity of the enterprise. Sainted Maria! just fancy talking like that to a man almost bowed down with grief—and hardware!

With rifles at full cock, we were about to slip down into the donga, with the object of passing round a sharp bend in it to get as near the base of the rise as possible, unobserved, when my eyes lighted on a sight that caused what little exhilaration or facetiousness there might have been left in my system to ooze out through my pores in a cold sweat.

"Look!" I gasped, as I seized Bert's arm.

Not more than thirty yards along the donga below us, was a huge black-maned African lion, slowly retreating towards the river, and dragging with consummate ease the mangled carcass of our missing donkey.

"Shall we fire?" whispered Bert.

"Yes, aim steady, and fire first," I answered.

"Stop!" I exclaimed in the next breath, as I grasped the gun Bert had already raised to his shoulder, for round the bend of the donga there came into view a second lion advancing with stately.



mien towards the first one, his enormous shaggy head erect, his great bold eyes glaring intently before him. The animals paused and stood facing each other—their tawny flanks quivering with rage, their long tails lashing from side to side, as in a succession of purring growls, that made us shudder as they echoed through the donga like the deep resonant notes of an organ, they bid mutual defiance. They resembled two giant mastiffs at bay over an intercepted prize. Sinking slowly on their powerful quarters, they prepared to spring; the ponderous jaws of the one carrying the carcass as lightly as a terrier would a rat, relaxed their hold, and an instant



more the two mighty brutes came together in terrifying combat, with bellowing roars that rent the air like thunder, and seemed to shake the very ground we lay prone upon, for Bert and I had both thrown ourselves full length behind a low bush at the edge of the donga.

It was a royal battle—brief, but furious; and soon the creatures were bathed in crimson gore issuing from gaping lacerations, where each had lunged his great fangs jaw deep into the other's body.

The animal we had first seen was the larger and more powerful of the two, and fought with a desperate fierceness that did not end with the mere

mastery of his enemy. He stood snarling over the prostrate body of the defeated one, apparently fearful lest he should escape him.

"Now," I whispered.

Bert understood, and drawing himself to the side of the bush concealing us, took steady aim over the edge of the donga

and fired. Loud

and clear the re-

port of the rifle

rang out along the

gully, followed by

a maddened roar.

But the animal

was not mortally hit, and the next instant, to our

horror, we saw him make a flying leap towards our

side of the gully, as though with brute instinct he had

throughout been aware of our presence. Another

bound, and he had almost cleared the nearly per-

pendicular face of the donga, and hung clinging

with cat-like tenacity to the small portion of edge

dividing Bert and myself.

The animal had executed his movements with

such bold rapidity that neither of us had gained our

feet when the blood-stained muzzle of the infuriated

monster landed between us, on a level with our

heads, his enormous fore-paws clawing the earth

violently a few inches from our elbows, and his

breath fanning our faces with a hot blast.



Springing wildly to his feet, and butt-ending his discharged rifle, Bert swung the weapon round and dealt a crushing blow on the paw nearest to him, at the same moment that the ground, at the edge, crumbled away under the immense weight suspending from it. Simultaneously with Bert, I had scrambled on to my legs, and, as the dislodged beast rolled backwards into the donga, fired, the bullet taking deadly effect between the shoulders—Bert, however, a second later, sending a third shot into him to make sure of the matter.

While this encounter had been taking place, although it compassed less time than it takes me to record it, the second lion, though maimed, had dragged himself off, and, considerably to our discomfiture, had disappeared; therefore, feeling uneasy at the prospect of another such bout as we had just gone through, we left our grand quarry where he lay, dying, if not dead, and hastened back to camp before darkness came on.

The next morning we took our boys down, and after labouring for hours without proper butchers' appliances, succeeded in despoiling our prize of his oxlike hide, and other shamble etceteras, which Bert said were necessary adjuncts to show our friends that the hide was not a curiosity shop "reach-me-down." The sanitary inspection of the lair never came off.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

BERT'S DIARY—I MAKE USE OF IT—A VISIT TO DELAGOA BAY  
—CROCODILES!—A VICTIM—A NARROW ESCAPE—EUREKA!  
—"THE DREAM OF WEALTH"—EXCHANGE NO ROBBERY—  
BERT GOES TO SWAZIELAND—JOTTINGS BY THE WAY—  
DIGNITY AND IMPUDENCE.



BERT keeps a diary. When he is in good form he writes it up about once a month, because he says a man who doesn't keep his diary closely written up is apt to forget what he wants to write about, and had better not keep one at all. Following out this principle, he never, under any circumstances, goes longer than three months without dotting down some interesting matter; and never more than six months without losing the diary, and having to start a new one. I always know when an entry is going to be made.

"You haven't seen my diary anywhere about, I suppose?" Bert asks, after turning the place upside down. Of course, no one knows where it is, but

everyone about assists in the hunt, and if it is not the period for its total disappearance it is eventually found stuck away where Bert put it himself, after making the last entry. Then, for five or ten minutes, "the mountain is in labour." Bert thinks heavily, and when at last the sublime inspiration bears in upon him, history is enriched, and posterity is bequeathed with the ennobling thoughts evolved by a master mind.

If a girl keeps a diary, she would sooner die than let even her dearest bosom friend know what it contains. She cannot be a Freemason, so she invests in a shilling Letts', and no one this side of the grave ever learns the prodigious secrets she shares with its pages, which, immediately the fair owner feels at all unwell, and imagines she is about to die, are brought out, from under double-lock and key, and burnt, or else rendered hopelessly illegible with an inky flood of obliterations.

Not so with most diary-keeping men ; not so with Bert. From start to finish he is personified candour in such matters. His diary is more or less public property. He consults anyone who happens to be near him as to what he shall enter in it, is not particular to a week or two when receiving data, and only puts the diary away where everybody but himself can find it.

Notwithstanding these little peculiarities, Bert's diary style is, generally speaking, terse and trenchant,

and his subject matter remarkable, if only for its unmitigated truthfulness. I have, therefore, culled excerpts from some of his entries, relating to events occurring subsequent to those I have already recorded, and covering a momentous period in our joint history. I will start with an extract taken from an entry made in July. Of course, no dates are given, Bert having a happy knack of preserving the chronological order of his life without stooping to such petty details:—

"O. and I seem to have been out prospecting for half a lifetime, and have not raised a 'colour' in the pan yet." . . . "Country hungry-looking; plenty of 'buck quartz' about, but not enough gold in it to gild the wings of a fly." . . . "Ran out of provisions beginning of this month, so struck camp and tramped (the two boys and ourselves) to Lourenço Marquez (Delagoa Bay) for fresh supplies. Have just returned, after nearly three weeks' absence. Took a route across Komatie River and over Lebombo Mountains—distance from camp to coast about a hundred miles. At river drift, going, lost a donkey, the second since we came out prospecting. Stayed three or four days at Delagoa Bay. Horrid hole, surrounded by pestilential swamps, and inhabited by a handful of fever-stricken civilians, guy nigger soldiers, and sickly, consequential, Portuguese officials."

Bert passes over the loss of a second donkey with heartless brevity, I consider. The fact is, I was on the creature's back when it departed this life. Upon arrival at the Komatie River, we found the shallow, broad, sandy-bottomed drift, and the banks and river for some distance on either side, infested by crocodiles—from the immense malevolent-looking man-eater, to the pickaninny toothless little reptile still innocent of crime. We were on the horns of a dilemma. Either

we must retrace our steps the whole way back to Barberton, and, perchance, starve on the road, as our remaining stock of provisions was so low, or we must run the gauntlet of the crocodiles, cross the river, and go on to the coast. Withdrawing our forces, we slept over the matter, and next morning decided to cross the drift on our donkeys. As a personal favour I allowed Bert to lead the way, then came the two boys, and in the place of danger, covering the retreat, myself. The fifth and unriden donkey was driven on in front, to act as a sort of decoy duck. It was a bold, desperate enterprise, a forlorn hope, and, as we trotted down to the drift, I thought of the stirring lines of Tennyson's Balaclava Charge, and wondered how many of us would survive the death ride and reach the opposite bank to tell the tale.

Half a jiffy, half a jiffy,  
Half a jiffy onward,  
All in among the Croc's  
Nobly we lumbered.  
"Forward! the Ass Brigade  
Charge for the Croc's!" we said;  
Into the seething drift  
Rode we who hungered.

Here and there on the rocky ledges lining the banks, a little to our left, as we glanced furtively about us, we could see the scaly saurian monsters and their young, basking sluggishly in the warm morning sun, looking for all the world as dead as their stuffed prototypes to be seen in museums. Occasionally, one of the reptiles would show signs of

life by blinking its beady little eyes, or revealing with a snap-like motion of its long upper jaw (the lower jaw being rigid) glistening rows of saw-like teeth; while another would glide from its place, and, with a splash, disappear in the eddying waters of the river.

With the painful anticipation of being Jonah-ed by a pair of gaping jaws lurking on the sandy bottom, our nerves almost hummed, like telegraph wires in the wind, as our donkeys waded into the middle of the river, with the water covering their flanks; while we performed extraordinary circus feats on their backs in a frantic endeavour to keep our legs above the surface.

Except that my donkey, with torturous obstinacy, stuck twice in mid-stream, nothing alarming happened until we were nearly across the drift; in fact, Bert and another—I mean the unmounted donkey—had already regained *terra firma*. I was beginning to breathe freely, and about to congratulate myself on the successful issue of the hazardous attempt, when my donkey, without the slightest warning, beyond a piteous half-uttered whinny, plunged bodily under the water, precipitating me headlong in such a manner as not only to completely immerse me, but with so much force that I fell face downwards on the sandy river bottom. Fortunately I was not hurt, and instantly recovering myself, I took such bounding leaps out of the water in my wild efforts to reach the bank before I shared the fate of my donkey that, Bert afterwards told me, my heels appeared above



the back of my head. Be that as it may, I had just cause for alarm, as the water for many yards was soon



crimson with the blood of the poor brute drawn from under me by the voracious reptile into whose capacious jaws he had stepped.

On the return journey we learned of a drift rocky bottomed, and hence free from crocodiles, situated at another part of the river, and so managed to evade the reptiles; but the loss of another donkey proved a sore inconvenience to us in transporting our camp equipage and supplies.

The next entry in Bert's diary was made in September, and although chronicling nothing of much importance, may serve to show how matters were progressing with us:—

"Am sick of prospecting; another two months at it, and no luck yet. Would like to give it up and start as a mining expert. O. agrees that it is not a bad idea, and says, with our experience, we should be in demand to report on mines, and give professional instructions how and where to find gold, at the usual hundred guinea fee a time; but, he thinks, there is nothing like thoroughly mastering the details of one's profession before starting in practice, and another two or three months of prospecting will pass us senior wranglers, and about finish us off—and I quite believe it will." . . . "Only one little excitement since we returned to camp from Delagoa Bay. Last week Salt and Sara sawed off each other's annual wood crop with broken bottle glass. Both patients doing well. . . ."

The following entry in November speaks for itself:—

"This is a splendid country for prospecting. We have struck the richest gold reef in the world. O. says the 'Dream of Wealth'—(that is the name we have given the reef)—will yield at least a hundred and fifty ounces of gold to the ton of quartz. I think he is excited, and over sanguine; my calm opinion is it won't run more than a hundred ounces. O. has gone to Barberton to take out claim licences and to get more boys, donkeys, and tools. We have decided to keep our luck dark for the present, and O. is to say nothing about it in Camp. . . ."

This next is an extract from an entry a fortnight later, and also speaks for itself:—

"Am gyrating in a whirlwind of excitement. Miners, prospectors, experts, store-keepers, and cheap trippers, have been pouring out here for the past three days to see the 'Dream of Wealth.' Extension claims on either side of our own have been pegged out, east and west, for three miles. Thirteen only authorised sole representatives of Rothschild, seven big syndicate agents, three ducal couriers, and a millionaire, are camping round me, and making my life a misery with pestering offers to buy us out, or float us into a company. . . . O. not back yet. . . . My mind is gradually giving way. . . ."

In May following Bert wrote in his diary:—

"The mat-haired, hooked-nosed, North-German Arab who took over the 'Dream of Wealth' from us, on the understanding that he was to float it into a company within six months, and give us ten thousand pounds cash, and twenty thousand fully paid up shares, says the reef has 'pinched' out, and he'll be Jerusalemed before he will give us a 'shent.' His brother, who, unknown to him, shadowed us for three months, until we swopped our interest in the property for a mining concession he had obtained in Swaziland, went into hospital yesterday suffering from nervous prostration and shock to system. . . . O. and myself going to look after concession. . . . Good parties offering to buy us out. . . ."

At the last moment I found it necessary to remain in or about Barberton, and so Bert went to Swazieland without me.

The fatal white rot had set in with Umbandine, King of the Swazies, and the philanthropists who had pretty well wheedled out of him, in the form of concessions, the right to everything in the country, except fresh air and daylight, were going to hold a big meeting near the King's Kraal, to discuss the best means of promoting the future welfare of the country. As we had acquired an interest in the project, Bert timed himself to attend the meeting.

A local celebrity on the Fields, a man without guile, and a big philanthropist in Swazieland matters, undertook to pioneer him into the new land of promise. This Nicodemus was a kind of hybrid polyglot international character. By birth he was an Englishman, parented by a Scotch father and an Irish mother, an American by naturalisation, a French blue-bloused peasant in dress, a Hollander in his drink, a German in his pipe, a Bohemian in his habits, but withal not a bad sort, and, to use Bert's own expression, a "sticker." To leave a friend, to forsake a chum in distress, he told Bert as they rode along the day they left Barberton together, was, in his sight, an unpardonable crime, and he related how a cowardly son of Abraham, had left him in that very country, left him in a dastardly way, when his (Nicodemus's) horse had become lame.

A considerable and growing traffic had sprung up between Barberton and Embekelweni (the King's Kraal), a distance of some ninety miles, since the philanthropists had taken the latter place in hand, and there were several small stores and canteens scattered along the route of the bridle-path, at which minimum accommodation at maximum charges was dispersed by the rough-and-ready traders, who ran them as a passing speculation.

The two most sumptuous meals Bert and his *cicerone* obtained during the first stage of the journey was a breakfast off sardines and skilly, and a "high tea" on pork chops and gin. Including a handful or two of maize for their horses, the sardine-skilly revelry cost them sixteen shillings, and the pork chop-gin combination, fourteen shillings and sixpence. As they wanted to swagger, and put up at all the best hotels on the road, of course they had to pay for it.

They stayed at another swell place when they reached Steynsdorp, a small mining township near the Swazie border, which they discovered in gala array, and having a general good time over the news of the release down in Pretoria of a party of men arrested for lynching a kafir murderer in their camp seven or eight months previously.

Here nothing less than the local Métropole would do for Bert and Nicodemus, where, for a trifle of £2 7s., they were allowed to coop themselves up in an iron shanty for the night, and kick about in frouzy

blankets, while the standing army of vermin on the premises mobilized. Then they had to retire sadly and slowly into the middle of the room, and there, standing back to back, with true British Anglo-American Continental pluck, engage their implacable enemies until daylight appeared, when they retreated in unsteady order to the bar, blood-stained and weary, paid their score, promised the proprietor faithfully to mention his hotel to their friends, and then went on their way reflecting on the uncertainty of life.

On the Swazie border they halted, and had a dip in a large stream. They wanted it, and, as Nicodemus said, there was nothing like water for getting dirt off, unless it were a penknife.

Another night in another first-class hotel, and the pair finished off their journey, and arrived at the place of meeting, near Embekelweni, late in the afternoon on the third day.

The great gathering was to be held on the morrow afternoon, and the crowd of whites assembled to attend it had snapped up all the available beds in the one hotel in the place; but by some mysterious influence Nicodemus managed to get Bert and himself taken in—especially Bert, who, on going to claim the stretcher promised him in the wattle and daub out-house, found it occupied by a snoring demon who woke up as Bert, candle in hand, walked innocently in, and assisted the thirteen others in the room to pelt him with boots. The candle went out, and so

did Bert—to meditate on vengeance. He waited until the sleeping beauties had settled down again, and then crept in without a light, grabbed all the coverings off the man nearest the door, and bolted with them into the outer darkness. When quiet had been restored he slipped back to the hotel, and the weather being comfortably warm, managed to put in a fair night's rest under the verandah, rolled up in the borrowed bedding.

In the morning he rose early, scrambled the blankets together, and stuck them away in a quiet corner, and after attending to his horse, went for a stroll round among the native kraals forming the settlement.

Upon sauntering back to get some breakfast, he found a sympathetic group of whites and grinning natives collected round a gesticulating individual in front of the hotel. The object of commiseration was Nicodemus, wearing a pair of top boots, an abbreviated gauzy-looking singlet, and a broad-brimmed diggers' smash hat, while a red kafir blanket, hanging with easy grace about his shoulders, made it difficult to tell whether he was posing as a Roman gladiator or a Red Indian squaw.

"Ef I could jist light on the stranger as raised my blankets and etceteras last night," he was saying as Bert came up, "I'd make him curly-headed for the rest of his nat'ral life, tho' he was the lankest-haired coon as ever cut teeth; call me Cæsar if I wouldn't."

I'd even part with my eyeglass concesshin in this country, an' give up my meetin' rights to-day for his apprehension. This ain't a country to pick up spare fits in, an' I can't waltz around and ride a hoss in this heathen apparul, 'specially as I've bin accustomed to food an' clothin' since I was considerable youthful."

Something told Bert that he was the author of Nicodemus's misfortune, but as his hair has been beautifully curly from birth, beyond duly sympathising with the sufferer he decided to keep quiet, and took the first opportunity of getting away to make investigations.

Amid the blankets he had used and scattered along his line of flight of the previous night, he discovered Nicodemus's missing wardrobe, which, for additional warmth presumably, must have been piled on top of him when Bert ruthlessly laid him bare. By stratagem Bert managed to smuggle all the things back to the place where Nicodemus had slept, and this done, he suggested with bland indifference to the Roman squaw, that there was no harm in making a final search in that quarter, as the clothes *might* just possibly be there *somewhere*.

Bert occupied the morning, before the meeting commenced, in paying a visit to Umbandine, paramount chief of the country, otherwise King of the Swazies.

His Majesty was in a bad way, and in the hands of his fiendish-looking witch doctors, who were dosing

him with powdered snake skins, slugs, and other dainty nostrums. He had temporarily vacated his throne (a red gin case), and had prostrated his twenty odd stone of monarchical obesity upon the ground inside his Royal Kraal or stockade, where he lay groaning, with only his elephantine legs visible from under a big dirty blanket.

It was an undignified attitude to be found in, especially for a man swaying an army of thirty thousand warriors, the pick and flower of a really fine race. When Bert had feasted his eyes sufficiently on the regal extremities, and was leaving the Presence to have a look round the royal harem, he was accosted by the Crown Prince.



His Royal Highness, a lad of about sixteen, dressed in a toe-ring, was playing "odd man out" with some of the aristocracy in the palace yard; but when he saw a philanthropist in Bert, he left his suite, and for half-a-crown made himself quite affable for nearly five minutes, winding up by sending one of his A.D.C.'s to show Bert a short cut into his father's seraglio, where, Bert says, he was also well received, after paying his footing at the rate of a shilling a head, "bansell," all round to the twenty-five ladies on the permanent staff.



## CHAPTER XIX.

JOHN B. AS A LAND GRABBER—ENLIGHTENMENT WOOLING  
BARBARISM—THE CONCESSION HUNTER—BENEFACTORS IN  
SWAZIELAND—WE RETIRE FROM THE GOOD WORK—FARE-  
WELL DE KAAP!—THE "UITLANDER" AND HIS MONEY—  
PRETORIA RESURRECTED—JOHANNESBURG THE GOLDEN—TO  
THE DIAMOND CITY.

THE absorption of new native territory by John B. is effected with curious similitude in almost every instance. The trading explorer, the missionary, the concession hunter, and the soldier, follow each other with methodical certainty. The benevolent interest manifested by these individuals in any particular tract of country, inevitably results, sooner or later, in it being drawn within the pale of the British Empire for weal or for woe.

The dawn of civilisation is heralded by the advent of the trader with beads, cotton stuffs, and Brummagem ware. This knight-errant of commerce, for obvious reasons, is content to carry on in comparative obscurity his self-imposed task of opening up a new field for

enterprise. Then comes the parson, with the Big Book in one hand and the Alphabet in the other, who theoretically does a good and necessary work, but *de facto*, the practical result of which is not encouraging, as I have taken occasion to mention elsewhere.

The third scene in the drama, (or should I say comedy ?) of Enlightenment wooing Barbarism, is



enacted when the concession hunter comes on the boards. A star artiste in his way, he is first insinulative, and then aggressive.

He sticks at nothing—from presents of mongrel hunting-dogs to cases of pink champagne ; from doctoring with anti-bilious pills to marrying a black woman—in his efforts to please the primitive Pooh Bah who rules the country he has come to benefit. Flesh and blood cannot withstand his spontaneous onslaughts of generosity and kindness, and the grateful response is the granting in perpetuity to the kindly one, of a concession to levy taxes, exercise a Protectorate, or run some other trifling monopoly in the country.

Unless the first man is thoroughly up to his business, and scoops in the whole kingdom in this way—lock, stock and barrel, rights, privileges and people—competition is sure to spring up.

Others come along on the same lay, and meet with similar grateful treatment at the hands of the sable monarch. Then the ball opens. The rival concessionnaires snarl, and wrangle, and intrigue, until Downing Street, fairly harried into it by gubernatorial urgings, by the importunities of newly be-breeched and beseeching emissaries sent under the care of some disinterested (*sic*) white nomad, to pour their sovereign's



troubles into the sympathetic ear of the Great White Queen, and impelled thereto by a subtle system of wire-pulling generally—Downing

Street, I say, steps in and settles all disputes by giving the best plum to the biggest—no, I mean the biggest plum to the best boy, and the distracted object who has played the part of Humpty-Dumpty is told not to worry himself any more, the good nice white man, with a paper from the Great White Queen, will look after the country for him in future, and rake in the revenue. He needs rest, he is told; he is looking poorly.

Well, with my usual chuckleheadedness, and with Bert's anxiety to cosset me in my opinion, we were unanimous in coming to the conclusion that things were trending this way in Swazieland.

When Bert returned from the great meeting near Embekelweni, he reported that everything and

everybody was wrong way up, from his Majesty off the gin case, to the man who had the concession to tax pork pies.

The white committee who had undertaken, for the sake of peace and prosperity, to govern the country, had split up into factions. The Dutchmen said their grazing concessions included mining rights; the Englishmen with mining concessions over the same ground said they didn't; the man who called himself the King's Chief White Induna (best friend—right hand man—main chance) told the committee *he* was the one person who had the real good of the country at heart, and ought to have most say, and he would see them—well, take away one of his concessions first, before he gave in to anyone else. Two other parties, a King's Chief White Adviser, and a King's Chief White Secretary, each said *he* was the only authorised spokesman for the throne and nation; the party with a gin-and-brandy concession sparred with the man who had to do with methylated spirits, and the hoop-iron concessionnaire fell out with the cutlery benefactor. In fact, the jangle was epidemic and spreading.

We couldn't see that all this indicated a healthy zeal for the advancement of the country and the welfare of the people—of the Swazies. We thought it augured a political wipe-out before long, and therefore, as "Barkis was willin'," we decided to accept the offer made us for our concession, and get clear of the scramble while we could.

The reaction resulting from the "boom" had already commenced on De Kaap, and men by scores were leaving for Johannesburg, the rising centre of the new Witwatersrandt Fields.

Suddenly wealthy beyond the dreams of getting any more on De Kaap, we consequently decided to move down country, and unless something unusually tempting presented itself at the Randt to detain us, we made up our minds to take a run home.

Within a few weeks of Bert's return from Swazieland, we were bowling south in the mail coach, our precious hunting trophies on the roof, our baggage in the "boot," and ourselves perched on the box seat alongside the Cape boy driver.

It was just our bad luck: the coach didn't break down, or turn over, or get stuck in a river once between Barberton and Pretoria; we tore along night and day for two days and a-half, and never even smashed up against a boulder. We became desperate at last. When we were nearing the last bit of rough road, a few miles from Pretoria, I told the boy I would tool the team for a-while, and give him a rest. Instead of gratefully falling in with the idea, he let loose a hideous grin at me, and said, "No, baas, you upset coach and kill people, me get spanked!" Then Bert tried to bribe him to pull a linch-pin out, but it was no good—the boy seemed callous, he was utterly indifferent whether it was our turn or not to have a thrilling coach story to tell, and for all he cared, the illustrated

papers could go a fortnight without a picture on "Travelling in South Africa," "A Breakdown," "An Awkward Predicament," or anything of the kind; we were to suffer, and the British nation was to suffer, because he was afraid of killing off one or two of the nine inside passengers.

The change noticeable in Pretoria since I had last seen it on my way to De Kaap, was astonishing. The thoroughfares were alive with traffic; long-teamed coaches running to the Randt (Johannesburg), De Kaap and Zoutspansberg Gold Fields, the Diamond Fields, and Natal, were coming and going continuously, with their freights of passengers; smart pair-horsed buggys, Cape carts, and American "spiders," dashed about in every direction; a ceaseless stream of well-dressed pedestrians traversed the side-walks; handsome buildings had sprung up, or were in course of erection; the clubs, hotels, and lodging-houses, were overflowing; and a theatre, a circus, and other amusements, were in full swing; while, on the outskirts of the city, a terminus had already been built by the sanguine Hollanders who have the monopoly of railway construction in the country. They said they didn't know what day the four hundred miles of line from Delagoa Bay might be finished, when once they really started on it, and therefore it was just as well to have a station to come to suddenly.

But if the change which the great gold discoveries in the country, and the influx of the despised

"uitlander" with his energy and capital, had wrought in the State city of the Republic was remarkable, the rise of Johannesburg was infinitely more so. The birth and expansion of Barberton on the premier Gold Fields of De Kaap, were insignificant in comparison, marvellous though they had been. Accepting the authority of Americans themselves, the rapid growth of Johannesburg as a mushroom city of the plains, was without parallel, even in the phenomenal rise of such places as Leadville and Denver City.

Within eighteen months, and upon a site where there were neither human beings nor habitations when I had passed over it a year or two before, there had grown up an important township, numbering a population (including the smaller camps and townships clustered round it) of fully thirty thousand—a feverishly busy and apparently settled community, exhibiting all the features of advanced civilisation.

The Main Reef, the singular conglomerate deposit known as "banket," a kind of bastard quartz composed of a natural concrete of stone and cementing matter, which justifies the reputation of the Witwatersrandt district as a rich gold region, is, in a double sense the backbone of Johannesburg, as it runs in buried obscurity almost through the centre of the immense mining camp, taking a course for many miles across a gently undulating plateau some six thousand feet above the sea level.

Johannesburg was about in the heyday of its

prosperity when we reached it—a “boom” similar, but fiercer, and of greater magnitude than that which De Kaap had passed through, was in full cry.

Numbers who had hesitated to journey to the more distant and mountainous De Kaap, had been tempted by the glories of the latest rush, and at every turn in the dusty streets and enormous market squares of the new gold city, one ran up against familiar faces hailing from the remotest parts of the country, and not a few from across the sea—men whom one least expected would be allured from the quiet of their homes by the fantasies of a gold craze.

Colonial and European capital flowed in unstintingly, and the share mania, fanned by the daily formation of new companies, was at white heat, and the big stuccoed building serving as a Stock and Share Exchange, a roaring Babel morning, noon, and night.

Like Pretoria, every hotel, club, and lodging-house was crowded, and the way Bert and I slept and lived, during our stay, would have qualified us in this country as first-class vagrants, “without visible means of support.” For sleeping accommodation we alternated between floors and verandah hammocks, bath-rooms and forage-lofts. Half our traps were left with the agent at the coach-office by special favour, the other half wandered round the camp trying to get lost in the various quarters where we were charitably taken in when night came on, or rather in the small hours of



the morning, for there was little chance of getting to sleep before.

To remain in a booming gold camp with money and abstain from a financial dabble of some sort, is pretty well impossible. Both of us met with numbers of men we had known in other parts of the country, and in a week they had put us and our money, or a good share of it, into what they each declared to be the grandest "spec" going on the Fields—Main Reef Deep Levels, Main Reef Extensions, company amalgamation schemes, gold farms, coal farms, silver mines, and copper properties; for every day fresh mineral discoveries were rumoured in or about the Randt district, and at times the excitement ran as high on coal and silver as it did on gold.

More by good luck than management, though Bert says it was his foresight, we came well out of the gam—the commercial undertakings we went into, and in less than three months we had only lost about half our joint capital. Then I said I felt homesick, and as the "boom" was visibly waning Bert consented to get under weigh once more for the Diamond Fields, *en route* for Cape Town and England.

The fast mail coaches running down country to Kimberley, were as heavily freighted with passengers as those coming to the Fields, and being anxious to lose no time, we had to content ourselves with roof-seats among the half-ton of mail bags carried by the great leather-sprunged chariot.

The groanings and oscillations of the coach, as it strained under its immense load of humanity, baggage, and mails, gave good promise of the smash-up we pined after; but luck once more being against us, it didn't come off. We nearly did, however, when we forgot ourselves and loosed our clutch on the mail bags. For another two days and a-half, without stopping the whole time for more than a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes at any one place, we hung on between the post office goods—baked, caked, and nearly smothered by the heat of the day, and the clouds of dust stirred up by the horses and wheels, and half frozen by the rush of chilly air at night.

Until the sandy waste near the Vaal River was reached, the coach was rattled along at a spanking pace by two-hour relays of eight to ten horses in a team—many of the teams being really fine cattle, two in particular, one composed entirely of spotless creams, and another of perfect dark bays. The heavy dragging work through the many miles of sand was performed by mules—horses again being requisitioned to cut a final dash into the Diamond City.

## CHAPTER XX.

KIMBERLEY AND ITS FAMOUS MINES—THE DIAMOND FIELDS IN 1891—CAST AWAY GEMS—DIAMOND THIEVES AND I.D.B.'s—THE COMPOUND SYSTEM AND ITS SEARCHING METHODS—"SCHLINTERS"—A VISIT TO DE BEERS—DOWN AMONG THE DIAMONDS—FIRE! FIRE!—INSIDE A COMPOUND—ACROSS THE "FLOORS"—SORTING THE "BLUE"—VALUING THE GEMS—A SPARKLING SIGHT.



KIMBERLEY, the Diamond City, and the greatest diamond-producing centre in the world, possesses an unique history and an intense interest for the visitor entirely its own.

Twenty-five years ago (1867), the vast diamondiferous deposits of Griqualand West were still undiscovered, and their existence still less suspected.

In 1867 a Bushman picked up in the Hopetown district, near the Orange River, a diamond valued at £500, and this was followed two years later by the discovery of the famous "Star of South Africa," a

stone weighing in its rough uncut state  $83\frac{1}{2}$  carats, and which was sold by a Hottentot to a farmer for £400, and resold shortly afterwards in Cape Town for £10,000.

The whole district was then thoroughly prospected, and in 1870 the Du Toit's Pan and Bultfontein Mines were discovered, and in 1871 the De Beers was struck, to be followed a few months later by the Colesburg Kopje, or the New Rush, now known as Kimberley Mine. From then, up to the present time, the Kimberley Mine alone, (the principal in the group of four comprised in the charmed circle, less than four miles in diameter) has yielded upwards of twenty-five million pounds worth of diamonds, and to-day the total annual production of stones from the four mines, Kimberley, Du Toit's Pan, De Beers, and Bultfontein, may be estimated to exceed four million pounds sterling.

With the systematic regularity of a coal mine, necessitating the constant employment of seven to eight thousand men, the precious baubles are unearthed.

Where in the name of King Solomon do they go to? Perhaps to Russia, perhaps to America, as the knowing ones say they do principally; but wherever the demand comes from, it remains a marvellous fact that it is ever on the increase, imperishable and costly gewgaws though diamonds be, and the manner in which their value is maintained is, I think, only

partially accounted for by the existence of a monopoly which plays with the market by regulating the supply.

Within the last few years, the growth of the monopoly referred to has robbed the diamond industry in South Africa of much of the romance which surrounded it in the days when the mines were in the hands of individuals, or small companies. Then, before railways had started towards them from the coast, before the stringent enactments of the Colonial Legislature grappled with the illicit trade in stolen diamonds, and before the industry became, as it were, confined within the four walls of the compound system, in verity more strange stories could be told of the fortunes and misfortunes of men in that isolated town of iron shanties than were ever before related in the world's history of mining.

Under the *régime* of the leviathan company, which now guides the destiny of the Fields (with a paid-up capital of nearly four millions, and the control of interests representing almost as much again), everything is changed.

The town of Kimberley (including Beaconsfield), with its thirty thousand inhabitants, its railway, its trams, and its electric lighting, has settled down to a hum-drum existence as little perturbed by the unique industry which gave it birth as Newcastle is by the output of coals.

Viewed from the surface, the mines themselves are enormous quarry-like excavations. The Kimberley

Mine, for instance, is a great hole eleven acres in extent, and about five hundred feet in depth, out of which some twenty million tons of diamondiferous ground and "reef" have been hauled.

Open workings are now entirely discarded in favour of the underground system of mining.

The greyish diamond soil, or so-called "blue ground," is almost rock-like when blasted out with explosives, and, to disintegrate it before passing it through the washing gear, exposure for several months to the action of air and water is necessary, this being done by spreading it out on "floors." These floors, or level dumping areas, which are traversed in every direction by narrow-gauge mining tramways, cover many square miles of country round Kimberley, and first afford the new comer some idea of the extent of the industry.

After the diamonds, garnets, and other mineral deposits, have been washed out of the pulverised "blue ground," the refuse is thrown up into immense débris heaps, which have accumulated with time; and surmounted, as many of them are, with mud elevators that resemble steam river-dredgers, they lend anything but a graceful undulation to the country, or ravishing charm to the scene.

Some of these débris heaps still contain many thousands of pounds worth of diamonds, and under the road metal of several public thoroughfares in the "camps," as the townships are still affectionately called

by the old hands, there is undoubtedly much wealth in the discarded sortings used in making the first roads in days gone by.

This loss of diamonds in the process of seeking them is accounted for in various ways. It chiefly occurred in the early rush, when excitement, carelessness, and lack of method and machinery, combined to render the dry sorting by hand then in vogue almost nugatory, except in respect to the larger diamonds which were easy of detection. A considerable quantity of this old débris is being washed over again, with most profitable result.

The top "yellow," the soil in which diamonds were first discovered in quantity, was alone believed by many diggers to be diamondiferous, and when the "blue" was reached those of them who did not actually abandon or dispose of their claims for a trifle gave the new deposit but scant attention, until, too late, they found it was more genuinely diamondiferous than the "yellow."

The wholesale theft of diamonds by those employed in the mines has been a fruitful source of trouble to the proprietary ever since the Fields were discovered.

Before the native "boys" were adequately supervised and searched, it was estimated that as much as one third of the total number of diamonds produced in the mining operations were stolen ere they left the mines or the floors, where, showing out of the "blue ground," they were snatched by the boys unobserved.

These stolen gems found a ready market among the illicit diamond-buying fraternity (I.D.B.'s, as they are significantly termed locally), to whom they were sold at prices ridiculously out of proportion to their intrinsic value, as many hundreds being often ultimately obtained for stones as single pounds were given for them to the natives in the first instance—a paying game, forsooth! The I.D.B.'s were mostly low-class Europeans, many of them of the Fagin type, who, with the predatory instincts of their race, and a precocious fondness for “klippies,” established a New Jerusalem on the Fields from the very first, and continue to “cock the walk” and “rule the roost” in certain quarters of the Diamond City, even to the present day, with a brilliancy befitting their origin.

Encouraged by these gentry, the natives carried on their depredations, and “jumped” diamonds with such impunity, that special legislation became necessary in order to cope with the evil, the Diamond Trade Act of 1882 being passed, which, among other enactments, rendered it a penal offence for any person within the province of Griqualand West to be in possession of, or to deal in, rough uncut diamonds without a special license, obtainable from a police department. Subsequently this Act was extended throughout the Cape Colony, the searchers' departments at the several mines were re-organised, and the compound system introduced, whereby the natives employed in the



mines are confined in compounds, or enclosures, for the whole period of their engagements, which generally extend from one to three months. In these compounds every provision is made for supplying the natives with the necessaries of life, in fact they are self-contained villages—situated in the immediate vicinity, and in covered communication with the mines; the environments are well guarded and brilliantly illuminated at night by the electric light, and passage in or out jealously refused to all except officials or those provided with a “permit.”

Upon the expiration of their engagements, the natives are literally searched inside and out before being released. This is necessary on account of the extraordinary cunning they display in concealing stolen gems about their persons, almost incredible means being resorted to on occasion, in order to pass safely through the ordeal of searching.

The hair, ears, mouth, nostrils, toes, armpits, have all and frequently been requisitioned in carrying on the illicit traffic. Swallowing the diamonds has long been a favourite practice, and it has transpired that large and valuable stones have at various times been conveyed out of the mines in this manner, the gullet capacity of some of the niggers only being equalled by their audacity in attempting (often successfully) to get down stones well nigh large enough to choke them, while amongst old hands at the business there have been boys who, having swallowed moderate-sized

diamonds, were able by a convulsive action to return them to the mouth at will.

Endless, and often dramatic, are the curious stories that might thus be told concerning the crafty dexterity of some of the boys, in their risky attempts to pass stolen gems to their sneaking white coadjutors in waiting outside the precincts of the mines.

Under the present compound system, a boy who has been spotted as a cute 'un has a particularly lively time of it when his engagement is nearing to a close. For a day or two previous to his departure, he is thoughtfully put on the sick list, and trained down. When his time has expired, and before he gets quite as thin as a gridiron, his examination, minus all worldly belongings, is completed by an *external* rummage. Besides having his dark corners well prospected, he is made to shake himself out by going through a recruit's extension exercise, leaping into the air, and in other ways has to perform a series of gymnastic evolutions, highly edifying to onlookers.

And yet, in spite of all efforts to suppress it, the illicit trade in stolen diamonds still goes merrily on, although, of course, to a much less extent than formerly.



I have heard many old Kimberleyites swear by their erstwhile shanty city as one of the few fair places on earth to live in. Doubtless sweet memories of the milk and honey days, when almost voluptuous extravagance prevailed, have something to do with this large order of lingering fondness for a place which presents to the ordinary mortal who is non-resident, so few attractions, beyond the one all-absorbing interest attaching to its mines.

Irrespective of the advent of the railway, the telegraph, small change, and smaller beer, and other factors which of late years have helped to draw the cork and let the fizz out of the place, the cancerous growth of the I.D.B. traffic has brought about a vile system of police espionage, and worse, that has honey-combed the community to its very core. All sorts and conditions of men are secretly in the jackal service of the special detective department. Professional male and female detectives, loafers, white men and black boys employed in the mines, canteen-keepers, and Heaven knows who, are ever on the alert to do a "split" in more senses than one, and rake in the money reward which is theirs upon the conviction of the tools of the I.D.B.'s—the latter astute individuals themselves being rarely trapped.

Provided that acceptable methods were always adopted, and these only exercised in a legitimate manner, not much could be said against what, in other respects perhaps, is to some extent a necessary evil.

But a system of trapping, only a shade better than the illicit trade itself, is generally resorted to, and has been the iniquitous means of sending more than one innocent victim to penal servitude on the Table Bay breakwater.

Charcoal and diamonds are precisely the same in chemical atoms; some secret process of crystallisation alone constitutes the difference between them, and when subjected to powerful and concentrated heat the gem is reduced to mere carbon.

Diamonds in their natural uncut state resemble pieces of regular shaped alum to the unpractised eye, and are more or less easy of imitation. Consequent upon this, a large number of false stones ("*schlinters*"), some of them formed into very passable octahedrons, out of the glass ball stoppers of lemonade bottles, find some circulation and use among the I.D.B.'s in "shinanikin" not only outsiders, but those of their own fraternity, who give them a chance to pass them in a hurried deal.

But among expert lapidaries, such deception is almost impossible; the tongue alone will enable many of them in the dark to detect a "*schlinter*," an indescribable oily, warm, and heavy feeling being distinguishable in a genuine diamond.

Before closing down on this brief, and far from adequate survey of the world-famed Diamond Fields, from a sightseer's point of view, allow me, reader, to take you figuratively, and as briefly as

may be, through a routine visit to one of the mines. I entertain a hope that I can do this without lapsing into a painful iteration of what I have already written, or careering off in a sixpenny guide-book style. At any rate I will venture.

Assuming, then, that you have already been taken in—(O.K.)—at one of the big composite mud-and-iron one-floor hotels, where brokers most do congregate, and the weary are at rest—(when “booms” aren’t on, and they don’t hold “high change” on the verandah outside your bedroom all night)—you sally forth in search of the local Government House, otherwise ambiguously called by some “The Company’s Offices!”

Having rendered yourself small, you politely ask one of the dainty youths in the large outer office whether he can obtain for you a pass to inspect one or other of the mines, compounds, floors, and washing gears. You will probably be told that visitors are not allowed in the mines, but if you have a character you may see the rest of the show.

Don’t be bashful; go “the whole hog” or nothing; stick out for the mines part of the programme. Hint that you are a “personage,” a concession-man from Pungwe River way, a member of the Africander Bond, or even a chum of the Diamond King himself—anything of sufficient impressiveness, and you’ll score.

When you have secured a through pass, you make for the mine—say De Beers. You will find it

protected by a close barbed wire fence, half as high as a house; but entering by a gateway, where your credentials will be inquired into, you pass on to the edge of the mine, one side of which is now a miniature Clapham Junction of trolley lines and railway crossings. Here, upon looking down into the huge gaping hole, you will probably come to the conclusion that it might be a boss rubbish shoot, but is a fraud for a diamond mine.

Beyond a smouldering observable in yon corner, caused by the action of heat and water upon the sulphur with which the ground is in some parts impregnated, signs of life or activity on the part of man or nature are almost *nil*. But beneath the tumbled mass of reef, that has silted in upon and smothered the greater portion of the diamondiferous "blue ground" once exposed, a hive of workers are busily engaged honeycombing the precious deposit.

Open working with aerial gear is here no longer safe or profitable, on account of the depth attained, hence underground working has taken its place; therefore it is necessary to dive into the bowels of the earth, by way of the incline-shaft near at hand.

Instructed by the man in charge, you recline full length on your back in a coffin-like box, and after being told to hang on, or rather hang in, lest you should neglect such a trifling precaution, a bell is rung in the adjacent engine-house, and away you shoot, feet first, down a drainpipe switchback railway arrangement,

with sensations varying according to the state of your stomach, and the nature of your last meal—nerves, of course, excepted; you are not supposed to have any on such occasions.

If nothing goes wrong, it is quite possible you will reach the bottom alive, in which event you will be handed a peace offering in the shape of a lighted candle; take the “dazzler” and follow your guide.

You are now down amongst the diamonds, underneath the ground, but don't feel disappointed if the watery walls of the stuffy little tunnels you pass along are not resplendent with flashing gems, after the manner of fairy tales; don't stop more than ten times in five minutes to pick up a drop of twinkling water, or piece of pyrites, for a real rough diamond; and don't wipe any stray lumps of “blue” into your pockets to carry away as a memento, unless you want to learn how to make breakwaters at the Government expense—a second Koh-i-noor might be embedded in one of the lumps and get you run in as an I.D.B., for your inspection permit distinctly holds you liable to be searched if needs be.

After groping awhile along the sloppy trolly-traversed tunnels you will emerge into a large dimly-lighted cavern. It is where the “blue” is being broken out in earnest, and is technically known to miners as a “chamber working.”

The general effect of the subterranean scene reminds you somewhat of a living representation of

Dante's *Inferno*, and, if you are anyway dyspeptic, or of an imaginative turn of mind, the gruesome analogy will be further heightened by the heated atmosphere, laden with the stale chemical fumes of dynamite, the shimmering black skins and grinning visages of the impish-looking figures, hammering, delving, and chattering, as they peer curiously at you from the ragged-shaped holes and crevices where they are working by the fitful light of guttering candles, some of them perched on the fallen masses of freshly-hewn diamond soil, others apparently making a perilous attempt to eat their way through the vaulted chamber to the surface by breaking out the tenacious "blue ground" from the regions of the roof, while the presiding white genius, their "baas," blends his sonorous commands now and again with the incessant monotone of the refrain kept up by some of the aforesaid imps.

Whilst yet your eyes are straining in the prevalent gloom to take in the weird surroundings, you are startled by the ominous cry of "Fire! Fire!" The cry is taken up and echoed and re-echoed on all sides. The naked steaming imps scurry away into the tunnels, or worm themselves out of sight in neighbouring crevices, and quickly enough you follow suit, and scuttle into a tunnel too. The knowledge that you are buried alive like a rabbit in its burrow adds to the alarm you feel, at what you surely believe is an impending catastrophe of the worst kind. The horrors



of a colliery explosion, the terrible idea that you are about to be incinerated in the bowels of the earth, or blown sky-high with the lava and ashes of a volcanic eruption, fill your mind with a sickening foreboding that you are going to be damaged, and perhaps you make a fool of yourself by hugging the first man you can get hold of, while you audibly pray for the fresh air and sunlight of the surface. As you pull yourself together to die game, the catastrophe comes off. A rush of air, the dull terrifying concussion peculiar to a subterranean explosion, and you are told the crisis is past. Then you gradually come to, and when you learn that another crisis isn't coming along you get chatty, and ask what it is that has scared everyone but yourself so.

Only a dynamite blasting operation, a cheerful little joke carried out for your especial behoof, you are told; so you smile pleasantly, and say, "How funny!" and smother down any hankering you may feel to indulge in explosive operations on your own account until you reach the surface, where the risk of blowing the bottom out of the mine will be obviated.

By way of mollifying you, perhaps, you will now be shown a diamond still in its matrix. Although it is not much to see, for the matter of that—to all appearance a bit of white opaque bottle-glass sticking out of a lump of blue concrete—still you may consider yourself favoured, as those in charge of the mines do not often have an interesting specimen of this sort at hand.

By this time, unless I am mistaken, you will have seen all you want to of underground diamond-mining, so, wending your way back to daylight in the same manner as you left it, you prepare for the next item on the programme.

This is the natives' compound near by.

Entering the well-guarded, jail-like gateway, you have soon satiated your curiosity in this quarter.

A large open barrack-yard-looking place, provided in the centre with a spacious swimming-bath for the natives, and encompassed by long low ranges of mud-and-iron sleeping shanties—the beauty of the scene does not take your breath away; the balmy usuals stalking around might.

Groups of niggers of different tribes—Zulus, Swazies, Shangaans, Cape Kafirs, and others—sick, or not on the working-shift, squat or loll about basking in the sun. Some are attending to the cooking operations round the ground fires; here and there a solitary one will be profitably putting in his spare time making wire bangles, or manufacturing a combination snuff-spoon and toothpick out of a beef bone; while others are having excited palavers, may-be about family affairs in their distant kraals.

A well-found hospital, a kafir “truck-and-tommy shop,” an apothecary’s store, and a pay-office, where they dole out brass counters, redeemable over at the “truck-and-tommy shop,” about completes your book. On your way out you may glance down the

covered way leading to the natives' particular switch-back into the mine, and peep into the searchers' quarters, where the interesting performances alluded to elsewhere take place.

As you leave the compound, you notice that the possibility of communicating with the outer world is provided against in a two-fold manner—firstly by the erection of a galvanised iron fencing, and secondly by watch towers at each angle, the electric light being utilised at night to illuminate the vicinity; and yet boys occasionally escape with diamonds, and at times actually return.

Upon breathing the air of freedom once more, you bear down on the steam tram to the nearest floors, where the all important process of disintegrating the "blue" and "winning" the diamonds is proceeded with.

Like the mine, you find the floors pretty considerably bird-caged in. A regular prairie of fenced-up knobby "blue ground" in different stages of disintegration, stretches away over the flat country around. Situated in what appears to be about the centre of this precious prairie are the principal washing gears on the Fields.

When you have traversed the intervening diamond meadows, you come up with a collection of mud-bespattered clanging machinery, and a string of rattling iron trucks, slowly but continuously propelled by an endless steel cable arrangement, called the mechanical haulage.

As you let the general beauty of the scene gradually soak in—(mind the mud doesn't!)—the automatic regularity with which everything seems to move, and the now-you-see-me-now-you-don't way the business is carried on amid the *débris* heaps, reminds you of a put-a-penny-in-the-slot working model of a big brickyard, or anyhow of some place where puddling mills and mud elevators are the chief features in the landscape, and unless you are of an extra inquiring turn of mind you will let it pass at that without going into details.

The next spot you make for is a group of buildings a few paddocks away—a few paddocks of “blue ground” that is—where the final treatment takes place, of the green-looking gravel deposit resulting from the washing process you have just seen. In these buildings the pulsating machines and the men sorters perform their interesting work of picking out the diamonds. The pulsators, you discover are an ingenious combination of iron sieves and screens of graduating meshes, beating or rotating in water, and delicately adjusted according to the specific gravity of the mineral deposits being treated. Finally, you go into the adjacent sorting sheds, and see the “wash up” (the thrice weeded and graduated green gravel from the pulsators) pass under the expert hands and eyes of the sorters. The tray-edged sorting tables are ranged along under an open lean-to shed for the purpose of catching full light, and at each table a man

is engaged with a triangular metal sorting-scraper, almost mechanically shovelling down the wet pile of "wash up" in front of him, throwing it open on the table, and snicking out from time to time, with perfect unconcern, dirty opaque-looking yellow and greyish pebbles you might well mistake for pieces of water-worn glass, instead of the most precious of all gems, destined to adorn anything from an Emperor's brow to a pawnbroker's window, from a Countess's coronet to a glazier's glass-cutter.

The sorters push aside a large quantity of garnets—pretty enough, but almost valueless, and of which you may get a handful for the asking.

When the sorters have completed their work, the deposit is subjected to a final scrutiny at rather strange hands before it is discarded. If you visit the same sheds later in the day, you will see a number of coloured convicts, hired under contract from the Government, employed in a similar task to their white brethren of the morning. Beside each convict a padlocked canister stands, into which he drops, through a funnel in the lid, any diamonds he may find. From time to time the white overseers unlock the tins to check the industry of the workers, who are encouraged to do their best, however, by receiving a trifling commission on their finds. In this manner a considerable quantity of smaller stones, which have escaped the white sorters, are saved from the débris.

From the sorting tables the diamonds are conveyed

to the Company's offices "up camp," where, if you succeed in obtaining special permission, you may learn something of the manner in which the gems (after being cleansed in boiling acid) enter upon their commercial existence, and you may witness a stage in their brilliant career prior even to their appearance in the wholesale diamond market of Hatton Garden, or on the benches of the diamond-cutters of Amsterdam.

When a large "parcel" is ready for valuation or inspection by the local representatives of the big European diamond buyers, the sight is a mouth-watering one. Classed out according to size, colour, and shape, by the valuator's assistants, the diamonds are arranged in small heaps on white paper-covered tables, placed round under the spacious windows of the apartment. Before the gems are offered to the diamond buyers an approximate value is placed upon them by the Company's two valutors, each of whom makes a separate inspection and valuation of the stones; and as instancing the nicety of judgment exercised in these valuations, it is said that the two estimates, handed under cover to a third official, are seldom more than one per cent. at variance—this, it must be remembered, is in dealing with millions of pounds worth of diamonds in the course of a year, and with an article of commerce having no specific value, beyond that dictated by the judgment of the experts.

Assuming, then, that you have seen, as a sort of final tableau, one of these wonderful wholesale displays

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of straw-tinted, white, blue-tinted, and other tinted piles of glistening rough diamonds—a sight such as you may read of only in the Arabian Nights—I think I have with you pretty well run through the lions of the famous Diamond Fields of South Africa.

## CHAPTER XXI.

A VISIT TO DU TOIT'S PAN—A PHENOMENAL DIAMOND —  
THROUGH THE OLD COLONY—CAPE TOWN: SPES BONA!—  
ADIEU TO SOUTH AFRICA—OUR FELLOW PASSENGERS—DECK  
CABINS—BERT'S LITTLE JOKE—HOMEWARD BOUND—"DULCE  
DOMUM!"

HAD we continued in company with the mails with which we shared the top of the coach, we might have caught the homeward-bound steamer by which they left Cape Town; but, as Bert had not been on the Diamond Fields before, we agreed to wait over for the following week's steamer, and in the interval have a look round Kimberley and the mines, going on to Cape Town in time to get comfortably prepared for the voyage home.

It was impossible for Bert to get through all he wanted to see on the Fields under three days, and during those three days he worked hard, abandoning himself to a big struggle of sightseeing with all the ardour and endurance of a British coupon tourist.

Acquaintance with many old residents served to get us well cared for, and De Beers, the floors, Kimberley Mine, and Du Toit's Pan, were each taken in turn, with Bultfontein thrown in as a make-weight.



As Bert was anxious to visit an open-worked mine, it was fortunate for him that operations in Du Toit's Pan were still being carried on under the old method.

Of the four principal mines in the group, Du Toit's Pan, although not taking first rank for the quality or quantity of its diamonds, certainly more nearly approaches the picturesque in its rugged outlines than either of its compeers, and when, as on the bright sunny morning we visited it, the buzz of machinery and the shouts of the boys working in the claims lent animation to the surroundings, there was an additional charm in the busy scene.

The last time I had visited Du Toit's Pan was an hour or two after the catastrophe of March, 1886, when about half-a-million loads of "reef" broke away from the precipitous sides of the mine, and swallowed up men, workings, and machinery, in a resistless avalanche of earth.

Before underground mining was adopted, partly as a means of obviating the calamitous results attending these fearful landslips, and partly for more purely economic reasons, such disasters as that of Du Toit's Pan were not infrequent in the several mines, though in cases where the loss of life was less considerable, the whole and woeful tale of many of them will probably never be told, until, as the sea shall give up her dead, the catacombs among the diamonds of Kimberley vomit forth their victims—a judicious regard for the susceptibilities of the native labour

market, and a desire to avoid outside criticism, having prompted the powers that were to hush up, as far as in them lay, any loss of life or limb occurring in the prosecution of dangerous mining operations, and many a "claim boy" has been quietly left buried where the fallen masses of "reef" overwhelmed him, or the caving-in of a working entombed him till the crack of doom.

With merciful concern for Bert's feelings, I made no mention to him of falling reef, snapping standing-wires, tilting buckets, premature blasts, or any other element of danger there might be, remote or otherwise, in descending an open mine; but I might as well have done so, and enjoyed myself, for, in spite of warping my conscience to reassure him by saying how nice, how too-delightfully exhilarating it was, rushing several hundred feet through space in a bucket, he deliberately formed an opinion of his own, just to irritate me, when we reached the mine, and he saw the swinging wire cables dropping sheer into the workings below, and the boys labouring in the claims looking no bigger than black pigmies.

"I don't half care to trust myself to this tobogganing arrangement," he said, as he perambulated round the big iron tip bucket dangling perilously close to the edge ready for him to get into. "Do—do you think—are you sure the wires will stand the strain?" As the man in charge said he thought they would, unless Bert's weight exceeded fifty tons, the strain at which

the standing wires were anchored at top and bottom of the mine, Bert felt reassured, and after climbing into the bucket, shutting his eyes, and receiving instructions to "freeze on tight," and keep his head low to avoid damaging the "jumpers,"\* he was whisked away into the workings below, followed by myself in another bucket.

Except for the enjoyable sensations involved in going down, and coming up, and perhaps the elation we felt when down at looking up, and wondering whether the towering sides of the mine would hold up while we were down, the visit, Bert considered, fell short in point of interest to an underground experience, and, in his opinion, the sight of gangs of boys breaking out blue ground, and filling monster buckets—the main business going on—was apt to miss due appreciation, on account of the engrossing attention demanded in contemplating the tottering masses of rock and earth rising to giddy heights above us.

Before leaving Kimberley, Bert became possessed of two rough diamonds—(it gave me a dreadful turn when he first showed them to me, and until he produced a police license, and declared that he had picked them out and paid for them in the diamond office). One of the stones, a pretty gem of an unusually dark amber or coffee tint, he bestowed upon me as a befitting memento of our visit. My reason for

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\* Wooden struts placed to hold the wires away from projections in the mine.

mentioning this unique and graceful act upon Bert's part is because I had the misfortune to lose the gift in a somewhat peculiar manner. Exposure of the highly carbonised and concomitant crystalline molecules, forming the pseudomorphous triacontehedral specimen, to the undue action of a rariferous atmosphere, without taking the precautionary measure of protecting the surface with a tempering film of oleaginous matter, induced a gaseous expansion resulting in a spicugenous disintegration. That is something how a mining expert lucidly explained to me why it was that the morning after Bert gave me the diamond I found it shattered into fragments in my travelling trunk. Another party, an uneducated commonplace man, told me diamonds did occasionally go to pieces in such a manner soon after coming out of the mine, unless a flaw or other evidence gave warning in time to protect them from the air, by placing them in oil for a while. When I go to Kimberley with Bert the next time, I mean to have some oil by me—a bottle of Macassar or a can of colza might come in handy.

Leaving Kimberley, we completed our journey to the coast by rail, arriving in Cape Town a few days before the next homeward-bound steamer was due to sail for England.

Speeding down through the old colony across the Great Karoo, now fresh and verdant after the heavy rains; over the rocky barrier of the Hex River

Mountain; and past the trim vineyards of the Paarl—dotted here and there with glistening white homesteads nestling low in their emerald midst, or scattered with accentuating picturesqueness along the base of grey granite krantzes rising grimly behind them—the living panorama our progress unfolded seemed particularly delightful to such as we, coming into touch with civilisation once more after long absence in the wilds. The wooded slopes and solemn grandeur of Table Mountain had for us an especial charm, as we glided under its mighty shadow, by the growing suburbs scattered along the lower terraces, into the Cape metropolis sheltering at its foot—the silver trees covering the mountain sides below the Lion's Head fluttering with the sheen of burnished steel in the last lurid flush of afternoon sun, as the cool evening breezes, fragrant with the ozone of the South Atlantic, already commenced to creep in across the bay and whispered through their branches. The great bay itself appeared more beautiful than ever as it swept into view, the summer heave of the waters, flowing in from the open sea beyond, softly swaying the many craft resting peacefully at anchor upon its shield-like surface, the rich golden border of encircling sand plainly visible away on yonder opposite shore, behind which rose against the cloudless sky, in bold azure outline, the Blauwberg.

The interval of my absence from Cape Town had wrought many changes in the city. The municipal

conscience of the inhabitants had seemingly awakened at last from a sleep compared to which the somnolent feat of the legendary ancestor of a majority of the City Fathers sinks into insignificance. A determined effort to avail the grand natural possibilities afforded of rendering their city one of the most beautiful in Greater Britain was distinctly discernable, and the progress, if maintained, cannot fail, in course of time, to place Cape Town in the foremost rank of over-sea resorts for the well-to-do and ever-wandering multitude of jaded Britons in search of health *with comfort*.

Abandonment of an unspeakable sanitary (*sic*) system in favour of a well-considered drainage scheme; the provision of an adequate water supply; electric lighting; and various other improvements, are all, tardily enough, steps in the right direction.

Possessing, in common with many other parts of South Africa, a climate of exceptional salubrity—beneficial alike to the liverless Anglo-Indian and the consumptive Englishman—it is typical of the country that the Cape has only within the last year or two made any serious bid to entice further south the hypochondriacal aristocrats, the languishing invalids, and the persevering tourists who, hitherto, have been content to stay at Madeira, or at Teneriffe, or to trapeze half across Europe to linger in the fœtid bazaars of Cairo, to smoke cheroots behind the verandah tattas of Shepherd's Hotel, or to haunt the sand-bank beauties of the Nile.

On the Wednesday following our arrival in Cape Town, we sailed for England.

Ten years had brought about a vast improvement in the mail and passenger services of the two principal lines running between England and South Africa, both companies having done much to accelerate the ever-increasing traffic.

Such as were considered crack boats when we went out had been, for the most part, superseded by newer vessels.

Favoured with fine weather, we arrived in England seventeen days after leaving Cape Town—nearly a week less than it took us to go out in 1881, and as like as not a week longer than the same voyage will take ten years hence.

The ship we took passage in, a Castle liner, was on her maiden trip, fast, roomy, and a good sea-boat, and it being the season of the year most favourable for visiting Europe, our fellow-passengers were numerous.

Many of them were successful colonists — newly-fledged legislators, oozing with condescension and a delusive anticipation of patrician lionising awaiting them in England; opulent, simple-minded, old Dutch "*oompies*," inveigled at last from the seclusion of their distant "*boerenplaats*" to visit the wonders of the Northern Old World; up-country store-keepers, reserved and rusty from a life of isolation; mining men from the gold and diamond fields; and ubiquitous Hebrews from everywhere.

Of such, and many another, were our co-voyagers—heavy invalids galore, male and female; military men, “Haw-haw, seedy-by-gad don’t-you-know,” going home on leave; giggling schoolgirls packed off to the older countries to receive an educational super-polish; jocular parsons completing the round voyage; an odd lot of “square heads” making for the “Faderland”; and an odder female mystery between



forty and seventy, in lank drapery and blue spectacles, who wailed “Love me once again,” in the music saloon alongside our deck cabins, on an average twice a day for a week, until the young thing overheard Bert growl that the man who would could have no taste.

Yes, by the bye, we occupied deck cabins this time. They were something novel in ship-building to us; they had come into fashion while we had been fossilising up country, and when the passenger clerk said we were just in time to secure the last two single-berthed ones to ourselves the monotony of life for us was broken. For years—every time we contemplated running home, and remembered the *state* we came out in, in the afterpart of a grand saloon—we had pictured ourselves making the Elysium voyage in deck cabins, of which every new man out from home had talked to us about.

The class of cabins I allude to are those situated



on the upper deck under the promenade. The two allocated to us adjoined on the left-hand side of the ship near the main staircase as we faced the cow-house at the other end; or perhaps Bert's way of putting it is better—they were half a hitch away from the saloon companion on the port side near the after hatch. Anyhow, they were nice convenient *bijou* sleeping-cots in a handy part of the ship, and for a couple of days we purred with satisfaction at our marine quarters. As Bert remarked on the first night out from Cape Town, when he came into my cabin in his pyjamas, smoking Boer tobacco, there was plenty of fresh air and freedom to be had (the deck cabins being reserved for men), and at night in the tropics, after the ladies had retired below, we could potter about on deck *en robe de cabin*, or lie in our bunks with our cabin doors open, gazing out upon the moonlit sea, the while we listed to the plaintive music of the surging waves, as the noble vessel ploughed her pathless way across the bounding main. And so it might have been. But Fate ordained otherwise. That is to say, Bert was idiot enough to make himself popular with some fellows occupying cabins on the lower deck, and got us both mixed up in a sort of maudlin friendship with them.

From the moment this fraternising with downstairs people commenced, the poetry of the thing began to fade. The bounding main, the moonlit sea, and the salt water harmony could go hang after

that, and at a rough calculation I estimate that for a fortnight we only had the cabins to ourselves about two hours in every twenty-four. The rest of the time our newly-found friends shared them with us—that is, they let us have the use of them when they were out, or occupying their own quarters, which wasn't often; but still, they couldn't help that—there were so many of them took shares in the concern.

In the daytime they monopolised our wash-basins and towels, lopped about in our bunks, used our brushes, borrowed our binoculars, and smoked our tobacco.

“You don't mind, old fellow, do you?” they asked, with a winning smile all their own. “It *is* such a horrid fag to go below every time a man wants anything, and so beastly stuffy down there this hot weather.” At night, after the smoking-saloon was closed, half-a-dozen of them generally distributed themselves between us, sitting on our trunks, and on our legs, smoking and debating until early morning, when the contingent who *had* turned in a few hours before commenced to get about again on deck, it being “so confoundedly hot and sleepless below, by Jove;” and, of course, these playfully poked their heads into our cabins to roar out an inquiry as to *how* much longer we were going to sleep, coming in bodily immediately afterwards to talk about the disgraceful way in which Mrs. Somebody's blessed baby was yelling again below, keeping everyone awake but the lucky dogs who had deck cabins.

No! when a man has a deck cabin he should restrict himself to top deck society, otherwise the odds are against his getting value for his money.

What with the usual sports and concerts, daily sweeps on the ship's run, and nocturnal raids of practical jokers, there was sufficient social stir aboard to avert any possible stagnation of spirits.

In the practical joking branch of intellectual diversion, Bert particularly distinguished himself. Some of his downstairs friends said one day that things were getting intolerably flat on board, and to relieve the fearful *ennui* from which they were convinced everyone was acutely suffering, suggested to Bert that he, as possessing the popularity and high moral reputation necessary to create the desired sensation, should lend himself to getting up a bristling mock scandal of some sort—they would arrange the details.

Bert, who said the idea was really too funny, consented. Forthwith it was breathed in strict confidence to a select few of the passengers, that Bert had been caught red-handed abstracting another man's watch from an adjacent cabin. In twenty-four hours the breath of evil rumour had done its work, and the light-fingered propensity of Bert was the talk of the ship, the one absorbing topic of confidential conversation. From his pinnacle of popularity he fell with a swoop. One section in the saloon turned amateur detectives, and shadowed him at every turn; another

set about assiduously enlarging upon the enormity of his offence, until at last it was generally accepted as a fact that Bert was nothing more or less than a swell mobsman, and that it behoved everyone while he was about to keep an eye on their personal property. Altogether the ruse proved eminently successful; the experts who had carried it out chuckled with delight.

On the second day Bert's social ostracism was complete, and no one had a civil word to say to him but one solitary passenger, a retired police-court missionary, and myself. It was intensely funny, especially to Bert's downstairs friends, but on the third day Bert said he thought—just for the fun of the thing, of course—the matter might be cleared up, and the joke exploded. His friends said he was downright unreasonable to suggest such a course while the joke was at its best, and affording them such infinite pleasure. At this Bert became more unreasonable, insisted upon having his character restored to him, and made frantic efforts, with my assistance, to establish his innocence among his fellow passengers. The result was a horrible failure; we couldn't smile the joke off anyhow, but rather enhanced the piquancy of it, and nearly gave the genial perpetrators convulsions. Eventually, on the fourth day, when Bert had arrived at a really robust opinion concerning practical jokes of a high-class character, a truce was declared and peace proclaimed. Grand court-martial was held in the saloon, and after a great display of forensic ability

of the "Trial-by-Jury" order, Bert's fair name and fame were re-established on board to the satisfaction of everybody—except the practical jokers, who said it would have been much more funny to have kept up the joke a little longer.

\* \* \* \* \*

But now our voyage is over—a pleasant one withal—my tale is told.

It seems but yesterday we stepped ashore, strangers in a strange land. Ten years have swiftly flown. With feelings not untinged with sorrow, we have watched the last faint traces of the Cape headlands sink beneath the horizon. Madeira—the fairy isle of the sea, her fertile beauty glorious in the westering sun, the flecking vapour creeping about her mountain sides—has passed from view. The last expanse of dividing ocean has been crossed. The rugged coast of Cornwall has loomed above the waste of waters, the milk-white cliffs of Devon have risen clear and sharp above the blue curl and creaming foam of breakers. Tall Eddystone, standing sentinel-like over her sunken rocks, has been left behind. With stately motion we have glided into Plymouth Sound, all beautiful this bright spring morning; the wooded slopes and grassy peeps of Mount Edgecombe rising with undulating loveliness from the water's edge. Our ship's huge anchor has plunged from the cat-head, the cable has rushed with deafening roar

through the hawse-pipe, and our voyage is ended. The tender, merrily lashing the water with her paddles, has come alongside; hearty greetings with the dear old friends of long ago have been exchanged; and, as though the sweet sound of distant quarter-chimes announced in some yonder school quadrangle the end of another weary term, our hearts to-day can echo, with schoolboy joyousness, the tuneful strains of the "*Dulce Domum.*"



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MEXICAN .. .. .	4549	4600
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MOOR .. .. .	3597	4500
TROJAN .. .. .	3471	4100
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ARAB .. .. .	3192	3600

Name.	Tonnage.	H.P.
NUBIAN .. .. .	3084	2800
GERMAN .. .. .	3007	2650
DURBAN .. .. .	2808	2800
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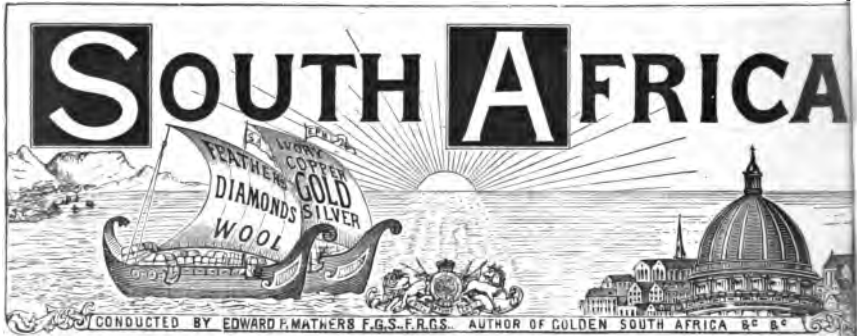
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